

# DN disabilitynow

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## An unfair cop

DN EXCLUSIVE BY JOHN PRING

Disabled officers from the Metropolitan police are set to sue their employers under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) when the act's employment duties are extended to cover police officers in October.

DN has learned that at least four disabled Met officers have already consulted solicitors and are ready to start legal actions if the force does not change its policies by 1 October.

As they are restricted to office duties, they have been unable to gain the necessary "operational experience" to win promotion.

The Met's disabled staff association (DSA) believes hundreds of officers could potentially have a case under the DDA.

Sgt Nigel Graham, DSA treasurer, said: "This is a time bomb. They will come

unstuck, I have no doubt.

"Transfers, promotion, any sort of career progression, are seriously hindered by any suggestion that somebody is not 100 per cent Rambo fit."

Sgt Graham will be consulting the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) himself on 2 October.

He had a motorbike accident in September 1997 and now has a back condition. He said: "As far as I am concerned, that was the end of my career."

Linda Van Den Hende, director of the Met's strategic disability team and lead on disability employment for the Association of Chief Police Officers, said the new duties were "a very clear challenge" to the force.

She said she expected the Met and other forces would face legal action under the DDA on a range of issues,

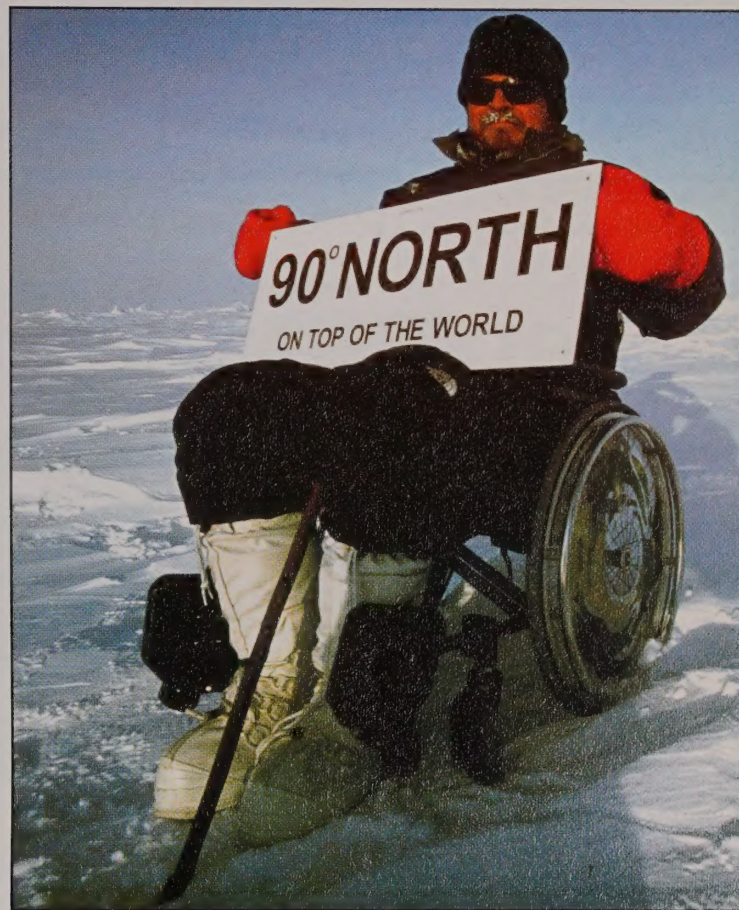
including promotion, but added: "I would sincerely hope that we will have done enough so there will not be successful legal action."

She said the Met would follow the recommendations of a Home Office working group on the new duties, due this spring.

Mrs Van Den Hende admitted some disabled Met officers might have been denied promotion because of a lack of operational experience, but said some had been promoted.

She believes the Met will accept that some officers are disabled under the DDA but will face court action from those with less serious conditions who it will not accept are covered by the act.

The DRC said it had been advising both the Met and some disabled officers who "feel they have been treated unfairly" by the force.



Pole to pole: Michael McGrath, who has muscular dystrophy, has become the first disabled person to reach both the North and South Poles. Mr McGrath reached the South Pole on 13 January as part of a two-year project to promote awareness about muscular dystrophy and raise £1 million for research\*. He reached the North Pole (pictured) in April 2002. \*www.musclehelp.com

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## Place guaranteed on single equality body

DN EXCLUSIVE BY NUALA CALVI

There will be at least one guaranteed place for a disabled person on the board of the new single equalities body being set up in place of the Disability Rights Commission.

The government's plan to create a Commission for Equality and Human Rights, covering disability, race, gender, age, religion and sexuality, has long raised fears that disabled people's interests would be sidelined.

But a taskforce set up to carry forward the plan agreed last month the need for dedicated representation for disabled

people by law, DN has learned.

There is unlikely to be a similar arrangement for any of the other "strands".

It follows evidence that disability expertise has been lost in similar bodies abroad, particularly in Northern Ireland.

The taskforce is generally opposed to "quotas" for the board, but its make-up is likely to reflect the range of interest groups. Its members will be appointed by the minister from the department with responsibility for the commission, also yet to be decided.

The taskforce is currently organised by the Department

for Trade and Industry, while disability issues come under the Department for Work and Pensions.

Members include Nick O'Brien, director of legal services and operations at the Disability Rights Commission, Andy Rickell, chief executive of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), and Lorraine Gradwell, director of Breakthrough UK.

Meetings are being held fortnightly to decide how the commission should be structured and run, ahead of a white paper in the spring, and it will be launched in 2006.

On the cover: Wheelchair rugby player Mick McNab in action at the National Wheelchair Championships last year. The GB Wheelchair Rugby team won the 2003 British Wheelchair Sports Foundation Team Sport Award for securing their place in the Paralympics. See page 12. Picture by Graham Bool Photography.



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### printing

Voluntary Sector Services,  
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Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire  
Tel: 01923 891000

### newstand distributors

If you have any problems  
obtaining a copy of *DN* through  
your newsagent or supermarket,  
please call Heidi Bush at Motability  
on 01483 211222 or email  
[heidi.bush@mmcltd.co.uk](mailto:heidi.bush@mmcltd.co.uk)

### alternative formats

*Disability Now* is also available  
on cassette, disk or via e-mail  
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Enterprises Ltd. For orders or  
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ISSN 0958-4676

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**19,350**

1/7/02 - 30/6/03



# 30 years for murder

Murderers motivated by hatred of a disability will usually face at least 30 years in prison before being considered for release, under a new sentencing framework.

The new Criminal Justice Act includes the framework of "sentencing principles" for all murders, which came into force on 18 December.

It means those who murder on-duty police officers or kill during a robbery or burglary, for example, will face a minimum prison term of 30 years, although this may be increased or decreased by mitigating or

aggravating factors.

The framework says the same minimum sentence will apply to murders motivated by race, religion, or sexual orientation.

A Home Office (HO) spokesman promised that murderers motivated by disability would also usually face a minimum of 30 years, although this is not stated explicitly in the framework. It follows the announcement that all criminals motivated by hatred of disability would face tougher sentences (DN December 2003).

The HO denied it was a mistake not to mention disability

explicitly in the new "sentencing principles".

A spokesman said: "Crime motivated by disability is an aggravating factor, and that will impact on murder in the same way as it will impact on any other crime motivated by disability." He said this would be "just as robust" as if it had been included explicitly in the new framework.

Home Secretary David Blunkett said the new sentencing principles for murder "will help to increase the public's confidence" in the criminal justice system.



Bright Sparks: farmer Matthew Sparks (left) has completed his first log cabin for disabled holidaymakers\*, on his farm in the Blackdown Hills in Somerset. He was helped by his disabled architect brother Andrew (centre) and a government Rural Enterprise Scheme grant. \*tel 01823 601270 or visit [www.tamaracklodge.co.uk](http://www.tamaracklodge.co.uk)

## Councils panned

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has hit out at councils for using new anti-discrimination laws as an excuse to close public toilets.

Part Three of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) comes into force in October and means public service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to ensure their services are accessible.

But Richard Chisnell, of the British Toilet Association (BTA), said they receive daily reports of toilet closures, with councils citing the DDA as one reason.

Carmarthenshire County Council has closed 27 of its 79 toilets, partly because of the DDA, but also vandalism.

And Mid Devon District



Council has closed nine public toilets because of the DDA, cost and levels of use.

DRC chairman Bert Massie points out that the new law only requires what is "reasonable" and said councils shouldn't use the DDA as a "false alibi".

But Chisnell accused the DRC of "back-peddling at the eleventh hour" and said the BTA had warned the DRC this would happen.

## Care charge changes leave majority worse off

DN EXCLUSIVE BY NUALA CALVI

Government guidelines to make care charges fairer have left the majority of disabled people worse off, according to Britain's leading charities.

Some people have experienced overnight rises of 200 per cent in the cost of essential home care services, with debts building up because of delays in billing.

The "Fairer Charging" guidelines, implemented in April 2003, had had a negative effect on the income and lifestyle of 52 per cent of

respondents in the survey by the Coalition on Charging.

One man, who required help in his home for 14 hours a week, saw his charges leap from £12 to £112.

The report\* called for the Department of Health to state that prices should only rise in line with inflation.

Report co-author Richard Holmes said some people had found themselves better off under the new regime because of rules on minimum income and savings.

But to balance the books, local authorities were hiking up

fees for other individuals because they were not required to set a maximum rate.

Holmes said such increases were "disproportionate" to all expectations of how the guidelines would be applied.

The Department of Health could not comment before it had read the report in full but said its guidance aimed to develop "reasonable" charging policies and any significant increases should be explained in consultation with users and carers.

\*The Costs of Care at [www.mencap.org.uk/coc](http://www.mencap.org.uk/coc)

## Public servants won't lose benefits

The government is to ensure disabled people do not lose benefits when they take up public posts, in a bid to increase the number involved in public life.

The announcement comes in the Cabinet Office's response to a Select Committee report on increasing diversity in public bodies.

The government also plans to introduce apprenticeships and shadowing schemes.

Dame Rennie Fritchie, commissioner for public appointments, has been campaigning for the government to reform the benefit system and boost the number of disabled people in public posts.

She said she was pleased that "measures will be put in place to encourage greater diversity in public appointments".

### Disability Rights Commission

#### Public debate: The right to independent living

- Why is a right to independent living for all disabled people needed?
- How such a right should be defined to be fully inclusive?
- How can it be practically implemented and enforced?

Tuesday, 2nd March 2004, 10:00am – 4:30pm, Copthorne Tara Hotel, Scarsdale Place, London W8 5SR.

This is a free event, with places limited and reserved on a first come, first serve basis. For further details and a booking form please contact the DRC by:

Telephone: 0161 261 1834  
Minicom: 0161 261 1702  
Fax: 0161 261 1701  
Email: [Kirsty.Hutchison@drc-gb.org](mailto:Kirsty.Hutchison@drc-gb.org)

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Lower rate	33.30	39.35
<b>CHILD BENEFIT</b>		
Only, elder (couple)	16.05	16.50
Only elder (lone parent)	17.55	17.55
Each subsequent child	10.75	11.05
<b>DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE</b>		
Care component		
– Highest	57.20	58.80
– Middle	38.30	39.35
– Lowest	15.15	15.55
Mobility component		
– Higher	39.95	41.05
– Lower	15.15	15.55
<b>WORKING TAX CREDIT</b>		
Disability components (£/annum)		
– Disabled worker element	2,040	2,100
– Severe disability element	865	890
<b>CHILD TAX CREDIT</b>		
Disability components (£/annum)		
– Disabled child element	2,155	2,215
– Severe disability element	865	890
<b>SEVERE DISABLEMENT ALLOWANCE</b>		
Basic rate	43.60	44.80
Age related addition		
– Higher rate	15.15	15.55
– Middle rate	9.70	10.00
– Lower rate	4.85	5.00
<b>CARER'S ALLOWANCE</b>		
(Formerly Invalid Care Allowance)	43.15	44.35
<b>INCAPACITY BENEFIT</b>		
Long-term Incapacity Benefit	72.15	74.15
Short-term Incapacity Benefit (under pension age)		
– Lower rate	54.40	55.90
– Higher rate	64.35	66.15
Short-term Incapacity Benefit (over pension age)		
– Lower rate	69.20	71.15
– Higher rate	72.15	74.15
<b>RETIREMENT PENSION (A or B)</b>		
	77.45	79.60
<b>STATUTORY SICK PAY</b>		
– Earnings threshold	77.00	79.00
– Standard rate	64.35	66.15
<b>INDUSTRIAL INJURIES DISABLEMENT PENSION</b>		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
– 100%	116.80	120.10
– 20%	23.36	24.02
Under 18		
– 100%	71.55	73.55
– 20%	14.31	14.71
Constant attendance allowance		
– Exceptional rate	93.60	96.20
– Intermediate rate	70.20	72.15
– Normal maximum rate	46.80	48.10
– Part-time rate	23.40	24.05
– Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	46.80	48.10
<b>WIDOW'S PENSION</b>		
	77.45	79.60
<b>EARNINGS RULES</b>		
– Carer's Allowance	77.00	79.00
– Limit of earnings from Councillor's Allowance	67.50	72.00
– Permitted work earnings limit	67.50	72.00

THANKS TO MIKE HURDISS, BENEFITS POLICY OFFICER OF SCOPE, FOR PREPARING THE UPRATING

Stairlift warning

Disabled people could be putting their lives at risk by buying do-it-yourself stairlift kits over the internet and installing them themselves, the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) has warned.

The trend developed in the United States and the association is worried it will become popular in the UK.

BHTA director general Ray Hodgkinson said DIY stairlifts are “an accident waiting to happen” and while disabled people think they are saving money by buying on the internet, they will pay in the long-term.

“Stairlifts must be installed by experienced professionals or the results could be tragic,” he said.



The right way to do it: Engineer installs a Stannah stairlift

Steve Dickinson, managing director of stairlift manufacturer Bison, said stairlifts are complex pieces of equipment and not something that can be installed “by a relative, friend or DIY enthusiast”.

David Jenkins, product safe-

ty advisor for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, said: “The implications of getting it wrong would not only be financial.

“There could be serious injury or even death.”

A spokesman for the Disabled Living Centres Council said stairlifts should be fitted by a qualified engineer.

He added that while the internet is useful for finding information about specific products, disabled people should seek advice from one of the 50 nationwide Disabled Living Centres or contact their helpline\* before buying.

\*Disabled Living Centres Council helpline 0161 834 1044

DN CAMPAIGN



Santa parks in disabled bay

A Christmas charity float was left for three hours in a parking bay for disabled drivers outside a Sainsbury's store.

A member of the Disabled Drivers' Association, who took the picture at the Sittingbourne branch in Kent on 6 December, could not find another space.

The float belonged to a children's charity that was using a supporter dressed as Santa to raise cash.

A Sainsbury's spokeswoman said: “This was not a decision we took lightly, and we felt our disabled customers would not mind helping a local children's charity in the run-up to Christmas.”

She said Sainsbury's was “very supportive” of DN's Baywatch campaign and its initiatives and had talked to the store manager, who has “reiterated to staff the importance of keeping disabled bays free for disabled customers”.

Meanwhile, the latest survey of supermarket parking bays took place last month. Results should appear in next month's DN. Nomination forms for the first Baywatch Supermarket Disability Parking Awards will be in Big Four supermarkets from 14 February.

You can nominate supermarkets that have provided the best or worst parking experiences,



as well as exceptionally helpful employees.

The deadline for completing forms is 14 March. Awards will be presented at an event sponsored by RAC on 14 July.

Safeway will display awareness-raising posters from February. Its trolley attendants are also receiving leaflets to put on the windscreens of offending vehicles.

Survey into rural life ignores access barriers

A major government survey of rural life in England has failed to address the barriers faced by disabled people.

Research for the Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was intended to collect experiences of services such as transport, education, healthcare and post offices.

But despite asking if respondents had a disability, it failed to ask if they had experienced disability-related barriers to services.

Jenny Herd, from Cumbria, whose son is disabled, was left “frustrated and angry” after taking part. She said: “Many of the questions, particularly around issues of public trans-

port, employment and childcare, were simply impossible to answer without reference to my son's disability and the need for accessible services and support.

“But when I kept telling the caller that my answer wasn't on his preset choice of responses, he could do nothing.”

A DEFRA spokesman said the research was not intended to look at how disabled people in rural areas were able to access services but was about the experience of different socio-economic and age groups.

He said respondents could answer in one question that they had a disability and if this limited their activities.

The survey will be repeated in two years time.

In brief

Low flies high

Colin Low, chairman of the Royal National Institute of the Blind, has replaced Sir John Wall as president of the European Blind Union (EBU). The EBU represents blind and partially sighted people from 44 European countries and is currently campaigning for more audio-description of television programmes.

Carer numbers up

More children and older people act as informal carers than previously thought, according to a study in the British Medical Journal.

The research revealed 114,000 informal carers were aged five to 15 and more than one million were over 65.



## DN CAMPAIGN

# TV's MacIntyre backs campaign

Undercover TV reporter Donal MacIntyre, who has exposed a series of abuse scandals in care homes for people with learning difficulties, has backed DN's Justice for Survivors campaign.

The journalist is now set to team up with DN as we campaign for a new criminal offence to protect vulnerable adults from harm and exploitation.

Mr MacIntyre fronted a seminar in December at which he and film-maker Roger Graef called for a new law to protect people in care homes, after their two documentaries for Channel Five again exposed neglect and ill-treatment of learning disabled and older people.

Mr MacIntyre told DN: "Every day there are thousands of cases of abuse. I think this

campaign has a great chance of success."

The charity Turning Point has also added its name to those backing our campaign, which include Central England People First, Voice UK, Values Into Action and Mencap.

It comes as the government announced it is to introduce the long-awaited Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) list from June.

Care workers are placed on the list if they have harmed, or placed at risk of harm, a vulnerable adult in their care. Care providers cannot offer a job to anyone on the list. The government postponed POVA in 2002, because of delays in processing applications by the Criminal Records Bureau.

## In brief

### Values valued

Judges at the Justice/Liberty Human Rights Awards 2003 have commended the campaigning work of the charity Values Into Action (VIA).

They praised VIA's project, Rights for All, which supports people with learning difficulties to learn about their human rights.

### New seal of approval

A new safety seal of approval has been launched for electrical goods used by disabled and elderly people. The CARE Mark\* will be given to appliances such as electric showers with built-in temperature controls, to prevent scalding.

It has been launched by the British Electrotechnical Approvals Board.

\*[www.astabeab.com](http://www.astabeab.com)

# No Ken do

DN EXCLUSIVE BY JOHN PRING

London's Mayor is to sue the landlord of his own headquarters because of its failure to allow disabled people easier access to the front entrance.

Ken Livingstone and his Greater London Authority (GLA) have been mired in "months and months of fruitless negotiations" with More London Development (MLD), which acts for the owner of City Hall, London Bridge Holdings.

Mr Livingstone told the Disability Capital Conference in December that the landlord had been "completely and utterly resistant" to the idea of improving access to the front of City Hall for disabled people coming by car.



City Hall on the Thames South Bank, HQ of the London Mayor



At present, vehicles have to unload disabled passengers in the building's underground loading bay on its lower ground floor (DN October 2002).

Mr Livingstone said he was now taking legal action and added: "It will get quite a bit of attention when we take our landlord to court."

An MLD spokesman said of

the legal action: "It is certainly news to us. We do not see that he has grounds to do so."

He said the area around City Hall was designed as a safe, vehicle-free area and MLD had briefed the GLA on a scheme which could make the lower ground floor a "proper vehicular entrance" leading directly to the two-level reception and lift area.

## Support is 'slow and patchy'

Disabled people still do not have the opportunity or support they need to live independently and take control of their lives, according to a major report\*.

The Social Services Inspectorate found improvements in services for disabled people have been "slow and patchy" across England's 150 councils.

The number of disabled people helped to live at home has increased steadily and more people are controlling their care through direct payments.

But home care services still expect users to be passive and councils do not involve disabled people enough when drawing up plans for services.

The report found social services managers are often "frustrated" by the failure of councils to view disabled people as a priority. And both councils and disabled people had low expectations of the standard and flexibility of services. In particular, people with brain injury and disabled parents do not

receive the support they need.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said the report's findings would inform the National Service Framework (NSF) for long-term conditions being published later this year, which will set out expected standards in social care.

To add your comments on the NSF, visit: [www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/longterm/index.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/longterm/index.htm)

\*Independence Matters - at [www.doh.gov.uk/ssii/independencematters03.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/ssii/independencematters03.htm)

## Honours for sports heroes

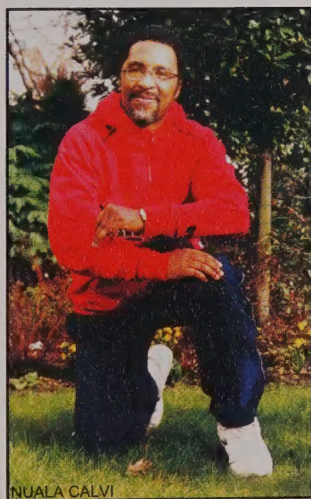
The world of disability sport was recognised in the 2004 New Year Honours alongside the charity world.

David Heddle (*right, main*) received an MBE for services to disabled bowls following his team's win for Scotland in the disabled men's triples at the 2002 Commonwealth Games.

And Evelyn Greer's work on the board of the 2003 Special Olympic World Games saw her receive an OBE.

Mr Heddle, who has spina bifida and has bowled since 1966, told DN he was "surprised and delighted" at the award. "It's an honour for the whole of disability bowling. It lets you see what disabled people can do."

Former boxer and DN cover boy Michael Watson (*right, inset*) received an MBE for services to disabled sport, after he fronted a Disability Rights Commission campaign to improve disabled access to gyms and fitness centres.



Chief executives of several charities were also honoured, including Margaret Goose of the Stroke Association, and Stephen Powell, of SIGN, who received OBEs.

Raymond Fletcher, personnel director of Remploi, the country's largest sheltered employer,

was also awarded an OBE.

Meinwen Marsh, of the Cornwall Mobility Centre, Bruce Fogle, co-founder of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, and Hugh Jones, honorary chair of the National Deaf Children's Society, received MBEs.

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# New dog learns new tricks

Roddy, a labrador golden retriever cross, has become the first "dual trained" guide and hearing dog.

He was trained by both Hearing Dogs for Deaf People (HDDP) and The Guide Dogs (GDBA) to help Angela Hassall, from Crewe.

Mrs Hassall has been severely

deaf since she was eight and previously had two hearing dogs.

She contacted HDDP when her sight began to deteriorate, to ask if there was a possibility of a dog being dual-trained for her.

GDBA usually looks for animals that are calm and do not react to noises, but HDDP usually needs those that are inquisitive and alert.

Claire Guest, HDDP operations director, said: "Angela's unswerving belief that it was possible to train a dog to take on both roles gave us the determination to meet that challenge."

Thanks to Roddy, Mrs Hassall is now more active.

The charities are hoping to train more dual purpose dogs in the future.

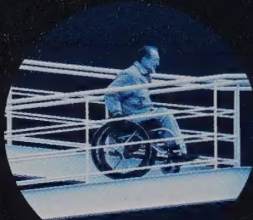


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## The final curtain

A celebrated disabled theatre company is to close after funding was unexpectedly withdrawn.

The New Breed Theatre Company, which has been running since 1989 in Manchester, was told that the Arts Council of England (ACE) had rejected its business plan for 2004-07.

The company, which won an award for its production of Irish Giant in 2002, was poised to team up with a new artistic director and general manager.

But ACE told the company it was too financially risky to offer continued support and was "not convinced" it would repeat its past successes.

It also said the people who make up New Breed have "little connection" with those who made it a success, and the company's fundraising targets were "extremely ambitious".

Pat Garrett, chair of the board of trustees, said board members had put a lot of hard work into the plan and she believed they had done enough to secure support.

She told DN she was "gobsmacked" by ACE's decision.

## In brief

### Care boost

The government has announced an extra £12 million to improve palliative care services.

The money, which will be used to train and support staff working with adults nearing the end of their lives, was welcomed by charities.

### Ofcom seeks chair

The new communications regulator, Ofcom, is looking for a chair and ten members for its new committee on older and disabled people.

It will meet four times a year, for a total of about eight days.

Email [ofcom@odgers.com](mailto:ofcom@odgers.com) or tel 0870 240 3087 for an information pack. Closing date for applications is 2 February.



## News Review

### A monthly round-up of news from the mainstream media

#### Euthanasia boss resigns

The chairman of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society was forced to resign after he was arrested by police investigating claims that he intended to help a man with terminal cancer commit suicide.

Dr Michael Irwin, who was released on police bail, is said to have admitted flying to the Isle of Man with enough sleeping pills to end the man's life. The plan was apparently abandoned because the man was too ill to take the pills on his own. He died soon afterwards with no assistance.

#### Treatment challenge

A disabled man is mounting a legal challenge to the General Medical Council's guidelines on withholding and withdrawing life-prolonging treatment, his lawyers announced.

Leslie Burke, who has cerebellar ataxia, is able to make his own decisions but fears that when he is no longer able to do so, doctors might stop feeding him artificially.

The case is due to be heard in the High Court later this month.

#### Targets can be reached

Children with Down's syndrome can reach at least some of the government's national curriculum targets in reading, writing and number work, researchers said.

The team from the University of Manchester said the results implied some of the children could have done better in mainstream than special schools.

The article, in the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, found all but a handful of the 100 children in the study had achieved basic skills in all three subjects after 12 years at school.

#### Veterans compensated

Thousands of disabled armed service veterans who had their pensions incorrectly taxed or underpaid, heard they are to receive compensation from the Ministry of Defence.

Refunds of tax and underpaid benefits have already been made, but extra compensation will now be paid for the mistakes.

# It's plane failing

A family's Christmas trip to Italy was ruined after their disabled son was stuck on a plane at Stansted for an hour-and-a-half waiting for a platform lift.

Alistair Muir, 12, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, was still on the plane when the next flight boarded, which had to be delayed.

Embarrassed staff told the family that delays were frequent because of a lack of lifting trucks and drivers, with disabled and older people often left stranded. When help finally arrived, it consisted of two men who carried Alistair down the wet steps of the plane in a small chair.

Mum Jane Muir said: "It startled him; his legs were going all over the place. It wasn't suitable at all."

A Ryanair spokesman said they had ordered a wheelchair lift through handlers Airport Services (AS), which failed to provide it. He said: "Ryanair sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to Mr Muir by AS and have met with AS who have assured us that this service failure will not recur."

AS has been served with two previous improvement notices by the Health and Safety Executive about its handling procedures. No one from AS was available to comment.

## Facilities Grant review threatens adaptations

The right to help with adaptations in the home may be lost under a government review of the Disabled Facilities Grant.

In response to a Lords question, the government said it would decide later this year on whether the grant, which is already discretionary in Scotland, should remain mandatory in the rest of the country.

Government minister Lord Rooker said: "It is a fairly fundamental principle. It is the last of the mandatory housing grants; everything else is now discretionary."

The government will also consider abolishing the means test for parents of disabled children in England as has been

done in Northern Ireland. Campaigners say thousands of disabled children are living in unsuitable homes.

Virginia Shaw, of Homes Fit for Children, said it was vital that the grant remained a right, not a privilege.

"We're pleased the government are going to be looking at how the means test affects disabled children, but we are concerned they are potentially going to do away with the mandatory nature of the grant."

"Passing responsibility for the grant to local authorities, already strapped for cash, will have lots of implications."

"As a disability movement, we need to be making sure they don't get away with it."



Christmas tear: a learning disabled boy was barred from the Christmas play and other activities because his east London school failed to employ enough support staff, despite having the funding. Lee Buniak's mum took Jenny Hammond Primary School to a tribunal, backed by the DRC. The school was told to apologise and improve its policies. Lee, six, now attends another school.

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**March** – Celebrating DN at 20 years old. A special birthday issue

**April** – Access Supplement

Prompted by the significant changes in legislation in 2004 covering access for disabled people, *Disability Now* in association with *Interbuild*, the UK's largest building and construction event for the trade, held in Birmingham, 25-29 April 2004, will produce a supplement on all aspects of access. This will be given away at the show in the dedicated area for manufacturers of specialist products and equipment. It will also be inserted in both *DN* and the *Access Journal*, giving it a print run of almost 30,000 copies. The supplement will give the construction industry the most comprehensive guide to access they will need.

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The Disability Capital conference, hosted in December by mayor Ken Livingstone, brought disabled people and decision makers together to discuss the barriers faced by disabled Londoners. John Pring reports

# Mayor 'shocked' at abuse

London's mayor told the Disability Capital conference he was "incredibly shocked" by the scale of physical and verbal assaults suffered by disabled Londoners.

Ken Livingstone said an interim report\* from his capital-wide survey\*\* of disabled Londoners had "presented a very stark picture of discrimination in this city" and the levels of physical and verbal abuse were "completely and utterly unacceptable". The survey will be used to develop an agenda to "deliver equality" and "move towards an accessible and inclusive city", he said.

In a further move, he announced that, once his new London Plan receives government backing early this year, he will consult with disabled people to draft guidance for private developers and councils on implementing its access measures. "If we get that right, it will be on the desk of every architect and developer every time they look at the construction of a new building or the refurbishment of an old one," he said.

Mr Livingstone also pledged to address problems faced by people with learning difficulties in accessing the transport sys-

tem. He called bosses of some of the train operating companies "low lives" and warned that he would "name and shame" the worst offenders on access.

He also pledged his commitment to the Freedom Pass – the free travel pass for disabled and older people – and said he would consider talking to the Association of London Government about using Greater London Authority funds to raise the standard of the scheme to that of the best of the London boroughs.

\*Another Planet? tel: 020 7983 4100

\*\*To fill in survey tel: 020 7983 4100 or minicom 020 7983 4458



Music of the fight: The mayor took part in a performance by the Routes drum circle after promising to crack down on abuse

## Picket warning Tough targets for tube

Campaigners are considering picketing day centres that refuse to pay proper wages to people with learning difficulties.

Nico Mac Given, campaigns officer for People First, said many people with learning difficulties in London go to "so-called training centres, day centres or work projects" where they get paid nothing, or only a few pounds, for their work.

One group is trying to use minimum wage laws to force

the local council to pay them for the work they do.

Mr Mac Given said that one man has been packing items for companies at a London "training" centre for 22 years. He said: "He told us he thinks he has learned enough about packing things now."

"Not being paid for work they do is a big issue for most groups in London," he added.

People First is also considering demonstrations outside council offices.

Half of London's tube stations could be made "step free" by 2015, as part of plans to boost access to the Underground, according to the capital's transport boss.

Bob Kiley, commissioner of Transport for London, told the conference that only 43 of the 275 stations were accessible at present, and some of those were "not nearly as accessible as they should be".

Current plans are to increase the number of step-free stations to 100 by 2020, but Mr Kiley

revealed his new tougher access target at the conference.

He said: "I think we need to be much more aggressive about this than we have been to date." But he said progress would depend on current funding negotiations with the government.

Nearly two-thirds of those who have taken part in the survey so far have said transport was their number one priority for improvements.

Mr Kiley also announced tough new measures that

should improve the accessibility of buses in London.

Beginning in the next three months, every wheelchair ramp will be tested every morning. If the ramp is not working, the bus will not leave the depot. By 2005, every one of the capital's buses will be low-floor and fully accessible, except for the few traditional Routemasters on important tourist routes.

Mr Kiley also said there was a need to "rejuvenate and reorganise" the Dial-a-Ride door-to-door service.

## Disability rises on police agenda

A senior police officer has promised that disability issues will now be a priority for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

Assistant commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe admitted: "Disability has not always been the highest priority when we have been talking about dealing with people according to need."

He said the MPS was aiming to have at least two police stations in every borough with hearing loops, approved signs and wheelchair access by October. All stations should be accessible within about a year.

A new disability awareness training package is being piloted this month in Greenwich, and another pilot in Westminster will train officers in British Sign Language. The MPS is also developing a policy to emphasize the need to record crimes

aggravated by disability.

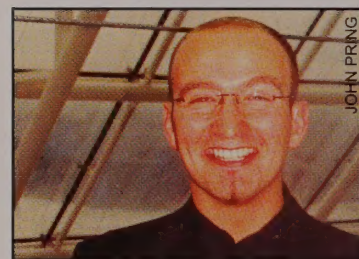
Nico Mac Given, campaigns officer for People First, told the conference that crime was one of the big issues discussed at the first meeting of a new campaigns network of People First groups in London.

Kirsten Hearn, a disabled, independent member of the Metropolitan Police Authority, told of one blind woman who was repeatedly mugged. The police wouldn't take action because they said she would be unable to identify her attackers.

But she said the police were "trying very hard". She added: "The MPS does now flag hate crimes committed against disabled people – but no-one has told disabled people."

The Mayor said he and the MPS needed to develop a strategy for dealing with attacks on disabled Londoners.

## Call for annual deaf festival



London's deaf community should have its own annual festival in which it celebrates and promotes deaf culture, according to one conference speaker.

Dr Tyron Woolfe (above), trustee of the British Deaf Association, also called for a cultural centre or museum focused on deaf culture.

He said the idea had been backed by members of the British Deaf Association at a meeting to discuss the Disability Capital survey. Dr Woolfe told the conference: "We really want to promote deaf culture and sign language here in the capital."

He also called for a London association of deaf people.

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## DN CAMPAIGN



# Eagle silent over heated questions

The disabled people's minister did not answer questions about winter fuel payments at a major conference.

Maria Eagle MP responded to a series of questions from disabled people at the Disability Capital Conference\* in December, but did not answer two about the government's failure to extend the payments to severely disabled people under the age of 60.

One questioner, Chris Hackman, told DN that he was angered by her failure to answer the question, and added: "I have both arthritis and diabetes and I need to keep warm."

A Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokesman said: "Maria Eagle answered a significant number of questions at the conference and if any question was not felt to have been answered adequately, this was no reflection on the issue concerned."

Meanwhile, a constituent of

Work and Pensions Secretary Andrew Smith has written to him to challenge his view that Disability Living Allowance can be used to pay extra heating costs. Louise Ballinger said DLA goes "very little beyond paying for essentials".

And DN editor Mary Wilkinson, Labour MP Roger Berry and Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance, are hoping to meet children's minister Margaret Hodge to explain why winter fuel payments are also vital for disabled children.

• Readers can write to Mr Smith at the DWP, Correspondence Unit, Room 540, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT. You can also write to your MP to encourage him or her to sign Mr Berry's early day motion (number 108) on winter fuel payments, which has so far secured 81 signatures.

\*See page 8



Art of the city: Ireland's first gallery for disabled artists was opened in Belfast by Kyle Alexander, of sponsors Laganside, and award winning artist Julie McGowan. The gallery is run by the Arts and Disability Forum. Tel: 028 902 39450, email: [adf.dforum@dnet.co.uk](mailto:adf.dforum@dnet.co.uk)

## No euthanasia support from DRC

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has decided it cannot support the legalisation of euthanasia while disabled people continue to face the current levels of discrimination.

The DRC's commissioners agreed the threat to disabled people's lives posed by such a law was "real and significant" due to the lack of access to palliative care and social support.

But the DRC, which had been examining the controversial issue for more than a year, said that "in principle" it did

not oppose legalising euthanasia for disabled people who make such a choice of their own free will.

Jill Stewart, DRC policy manager for independent living, health and social care, said: "We have come to the conclusion that it just is too unsafe to legalise euthanasia with society as it is today."

Lisa Cook, of terminally ill campaigners' group [www.ukActNow.org](http://www.ukActNow.org), welcomed the decision not to oppose the principle of euthanasia, but

added: "Their stated support for individual autonomy will ring hollow unless they start campaigning for a law which makes palliative care and social support available to all terminally ill patients but also allows patients choice over when they die."

Crossbench peer Lord Joffe has introduced a private members bill that would legalise assisted suicide. The Lords was expected to set up a select committee to look at the issue as DN went to press.

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# Anger over two month GP wait

A disabled woman waited two months for a simple examination that could be carried out by her GP, because surgery staff were not able to transfer her from her electric wheelchair onto an examination bed.

Vanora Goodhart (*right*), from west London, was initially told she could be examined within two days, after complaining of rectal bleeding.

But when she attended Abingdon Health Centre, she was told it had no lifting equipment and staff could not lift her manually. She was told to wait for a hospital appointment and two months later, she was still waiting.

After *DN* contacted Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust, which is responsible for Abingdon, she was examined by her GP at home.

Ms Goodhart said: "It has made me very annoyed and quite stressed. I do not feel I got the same prompt treatment as other patients who can get on a table. This is a form of discrimination."

It follows complaints from another London woman who told *DN* how surgery and hospital visits had become "a night-



mare" because of nurses' no-lifting policies (*DN August 2003*)

A trust spokeswoman apologised for Abingdon's lack of lifting equipment and said it was looking for suitable premises in the area to install a hoist, where patients could be referred.

But a Disability Rights Commission spokeswoman said: "We believe that there is no justification for disabled people to be denied access to basic primary health care on the grounds that staff at GP surgeries are unable to provide assistance with manual lifting."

She said a "sensible balance" between health and safety and patients' needs was not difficult if "reasonable precautions" such as staff training were taken.

# MS victory for Brit

The European Parliament has voted for more to be done to provide equal access to health-care for people with multiple sclerosis (ms), after a debate sparked by a British disabled woman's campaign.

MEPs agreed overwhelmingly to call on European Union (EU) health ministers to discuss the issue and for the EU to fund a study to determine how prevalent the condition is in Europe.

They also agreed to call for closer international cooperation to boost research and to encourage specialist clinics and training for medical staff in the EU.

MEPs were debating a report by Finnish MEP Uma Aaltonen, who has ms.

She wrote the report in response to a letter to the European Parliament from Louise McVay (*right*), from Sutton Bonington, near Leicester.

Miss McVay, who also has ms, called for equal access to treatment and services for the estimated 400,000 people with the condition across the EU.

The debate was held on 18 December, the last day the European Parliament was sitting during the European Year of Disabled People. MEPs voted in favour of the report by 340 to 0, with four abstentions.

Miss McVay, who is unem-



MS SOCIETY - PHILIP MEECH

ployed but looking for a job in marketing and public relations, told *DN* she was "absolutely over the moon" with the way the parliament had dealt with the issue.

She said it was important for

her to keep campaigning to ensure EU members implement the report. The Multiple Sclerosis Society, which has campaigned with her, said it was "very pleased indeed" with the debate.



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# Drugs ruling welcomed

The government is to take action to ensure patients are prescribed the drugs they need, once the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has ruled they are entitled to them.

Charities representing disabled people have been warning for months that there is no proper monitoring of how NICE's guidelines are being implemented by health authorities and primary care trusts in England and Wales.

Once drugs are approved, they should be available on the NHS, but many disabled people, such as those with arthritis, dementia and diabetes, have still

found it difficult to obtain them.

Lord Warner, the health minister responsible for NICE, told its annual conference in December that health bodies needed to budget for the cost of drugs approved by NICE.

He said the new Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection and strategic health authorities would both monitor the implementation of NICE guidance.

David Pink, chief executive of the Long Term Medical Conditions Alliance, said the minister's comments "sound encouraging" although he had not yet seen details of the plans.

# 50% of newborns screened

Half of all newborn babies in England are now being screened for hearing impairments as part of an NHS programme.

By December 2003, 250,000 babies had been screened, nearly 250 of them with a hearing loss, since the NHS Newborn Hearing Screening Programme was launched in 2001 with 20 pilot sites.

Under the scheme the number of sites taking part has increased to 54. The government plans to be screening every newborn baby in England by 2005.

Health Minister Stephen Ladyman said: "If babies are identified with a hearing loss very early in their life, precious time is gained to help them and their family develop vital communication skills."





## John identifies with children. Like them, he hates being told what he can and can't do.

"People have preconceived ideas about disabilities and how much you can do" says childcare professional John Kannerick, who has cerebral palsy.

But John hasn't let this stop him. Not only is he a fully-qualified learning support assistant in a school but he also has a second job, as a playleader in an after-school and holiday club. In fact, far from holding him back, John's disability has helped him in his work.

"My disability has made me more determined and more patient with other people. I've always been aware that as a child, very often your voice isn't heard and people can be very patronising."

When it comes to childcare, it's what you can do that counts, not what you can't. You don't need to be able to play basketball like John, but you do need to be able to inspire and motivate children.

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# Biker's marathon bid

A hand-bike rider has launched a campaign against London Marathon organisers who have banned him from the race.

Arthur Cutter, from Cambridgeshire, has a spinal injury and cannot race in a conventional wheelchair but wants to compete in the 2004 London Marathon.

Cutter has taken part in half-marathons, the Great North Run and the New York Marathon.

He said: "I had a lovely time in New York. When I finished I was knackered, yes, but I had never been more delighted. The London Marathon organisers say they are not going to make a separate race out of it. Why not? It saddens me. If New York can overcome any safety issues, then why not London?"

A London Marathon spokesman said only elite

wheelchairs are allowed to race for health and safety reasons.

"There's no way you could have bikes as part of the mass runners. If they were to race they would have to stay at the back. We would have to start them off two hours behind the mass start and then there would be no point."

Cutter raised his concerns with the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) before last year's race. A DRC spokeswoman said: "We are disappointed that the London Marathon organisers haven't taken us up on our suggestion to introduce this category for Mr Cutter so he could take part in the marathon."

"It would be great if the organisers would reconsider introducing this new category. Other marathons around the world have been able to do so."



Winners take a bow: (clockwise from top) Sandy Gregory, Peter Norfolk, coach Jon Amos and Mick McNab

## Hitting the top spot

Archer and tennis player among those honoured at end of year ceremonies



Britain's top quadriplegic wheelchair tennis player won three sports awards at end-of-year ceremonies.

Peter Norfolk won the Most Outstanding Individual Male Achievement award at the British Wheelchair Sports Awards (BWSA), organised by the British Wheelchair Sports Foundation. He was also named the Lawn Tennis Association's Disabled Player of the Year and BBC South Disabled Sportsman of the Year.

Norfolk started the year as seventh in the world but won six international competitions to



become world number one. The judges said he was "the player to beat" at the Paralympics. He said: "I've had a fantastic year and it means a lot to me to get this recognition."

Women's wheelchair tennis player Kay Forshaw won the BWSA award for Best Newcomer to Wheelchair Sports. The judges said she had "undoubted talent for the future and is feared by all others". Forshaw won her first national singles title in May and became GB number one in November.

Coach of the Year went to British Women's powerlifting



coach Jon Amos and the Outstanding Female Individual Achievement Award was won by powerlifting Paralympic champion Emma Brown.

Team Sport Award went to the GB Wheelchair Rugby Team following their 2003 European Championship win and the Team Event Award was won by James Rowson and Neil Robinson, of the GB Table Tennis Team, who also won European gold.

The Lifetime Achievement award went to archery's Sandy Gregory, as he prepares for his sixth Paralympic games.

## Records smashed by swimming Brits

British swimmers broke seven world, eight European and 16 British records at the Welsh Winter Disability Championships held in Swansea in December.

Danielle Watts showed she is a strong medal contender for the Paralympic Games by setting four world records in the S1 category for 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle, as well as the 50m backstroke.

Penny Calpcott, 15, set two world records in the S3 category for the 50m and 100m freestyle, while Paralympic gold medallist David Roberts set a new 100m freestyle world record in the S7

class. He was delighted to "break a world record for the first time on Welsh soil".

Colchester Phoenix swimmer Natalie Jones, 19, also shaved ten seconds from her personal best time in the 200m individual medley.

Tim Reddish, disability director at British Swimming, praised the swimmers' "excellent performances".

"The pleasing thing is that so many British records were broken. The more British records that tumble, the more it means we are raising our standards as a squad. European and world records are a bonus," he said.

## FA-ntastic

Disabled footballers will be able to compete in county and national leagues as well as local inter-club and schools competitions, under Football Association (FA) plans.

The announcement comes in the FA's new disability strategy\* which sets out how it plans to become the "world's leading body in the development of disability football" over the next two years.

The FA has pledged to give all disabled people the chance to play football in their local area, increase the number of coaches and introduce a tracking system for the best junior players.

\*Disability Football Strategy 2004-2006, tel. Andrea Stock 020 77454545

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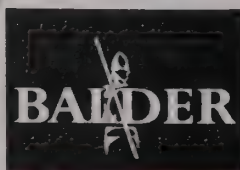
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# Jack of all trades

Jack Ashley is a political institution and a campaigner who has been fighting alongside disabled people for over 30 years. Nuala Calvi meets the octogenarian who shows no sign of slowing down

For a man whose praises have been sung by Tony Blair and who was described by Gordon Brown as "a shining beacon for honour and decency", Jack Ashley is surprisingly down-to-earth.

Perhaps it's the result of a lifetime of fighting for the rights of ordinary people; or perhaps it stems from growing up in the slums of a Lancashire town and knowing what it's like to work long hours in an asbestos factory – not something most Lords could lay claim to.

Either way, the Labour peer, winner of this year's ePolitix lifetime achievement award, has a warmth and wicked sense of humour that immediately puts you at ease. "That man over there's my sworn enemy," he whispers confidentially, as he smiles and waves hello to yet another old friend in the carpeted corridors leading to the House of Lords tea room. "He supports Warrington and they're playing Widnes on Boxing Day".

But beneath the amiable exterior is a dogged determination and tenacity which has made Ashley famous in political circles. He has campaigned for compensation for Thalidomide babies, was the first MP to raise the issue of domestic violence and has spoken out for bullied police officers. As a consequence, he has the reputation of being a resolute fighter for justice.

This tireless campaigning came despite Ashley having to cope with the consequences of suddenly losing his hearing, being deaf for 25 years, and then partially regaining it after a cochlear implant ten years ago.

He developed the

impairment just a year after the boy from Widnes, who made it to Oxford on a scholarship for "working men", had achieved his ambition of entering parliament, as MP for Stoke on Trent, in 1966.

Convinced it was the end of his fledgling political career, Ashley would have resigned, but was urged to stay by another prime minister who believed in his credentials: Harold Wilson.

For his first speech after returning to the House, Ashley had to arrange a system of secret signals with a friend and fellow MP to alert him if he spoke too loudly or quietly. "It was devastating. One moment I was perfectly well, the next, totally deaf. I had to learn lip-reading which was a very inadequate substitute. I managed to stay in parliament mainly because my wife helped in my constituency."

But with his passion for helping the disadvantaged sharpened by personal experience, Ashley set out to force disability onto the political stage.

"Disability issues were just not on the agenda. No one bothered with them. I set about trying to elevate the issues."

Work on the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Bill led to the setting up of the All Party Parliamentary Disability Group in 1969, which Ashley has chaired fortnightly ever since. There, Ashley can often be seen grilling ministers who come to "waffle, then do damn all". "I can be blunt and open... but there is no need to be nasty," he says, in characteristically good-natured fashion.

One of the group's biggest roles was in the fight for anti-discrimination legislation and



Still going strong: (above) Ashley at home and (right) receiving a lifetime award at the ePolitix awards in November

the establishment of a commission for disability rights. "The then Tory government said, 'we don't need that; education and persuasion will do it'. It was nonsense. We'd tried that for 100 years. The two have to go hand in hand."

Other achievements, many of which contributed to his peerage in 1992, include improvements in drug safety, updating rape laws and, more

Commons," he laughs. "And we still have a long way to go. There is still quite shocking exclusion of disabled people from all segments of life: social groupings, employment, families."

Things don't stop at the doors of Westminster either; Ashley's charity work includes being president of the RNID, British Tinnitus Association, and Defeating Deafness, the organisation he and his wife

**'We still have a long way to go. There is still quite shocking exclusion of disabled people from all segments of life: social groupings, employment, families...'**

recently, winning tougher short-term targets for subtitling in the Communications Act.

Now aged 81, Ashley still seems to relish the battle. One look at Hansard, the parliamentary record, shows the constant stream of questions he raises on issues which would otherwise stay hidden: awareness of cochlear implants among GPs, winter fuel payments for disabled people under 60, and disabled people being deregistered by their GPs.

"I'm supposed to be retired but I do as much now in the Lords as I did in the

Pauline set up to fund research into cures for deafness. He frequently writes to hospital trusts on behalf of people who have been denied surgery for hearing loss.

His support for medical "cures" for deafness may put Ashley at odds with certain members of the disabled community, but he is adamant that having his hearing restored was nothing less than a miracle. "Sign language is great for people who need it, but attacking cochlear implants is really ridiculous. The profundity of total deafness destroys people's lives. It



isolates them. It's a far greater disability than anyone ever realises. Primary Care Trusts fail to understand that – if they did, they would find the money to treat people."

Ashley barely has time to finish his tea before rushing off to his next appointment. It's no wonder he has rarely taken time to question why he does what he does. "I just do it, I don't theorize. Oddly enough, the whole thing escalates – you start by arguing about conditions in one house and it has repercussions on hundreds of houses. Before you know it, you're representing hundreds of people and you're a councillor, then an MP."

It's only once we've left that I realise Ashley has also been too busy to pay the bill. But it doesn't matter. He seems to be such an institution here that no-one will mind him taking the occasional rain check.



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# A right to life

Reverend Joanna Jepson's campaign against the late abortion of a foetus with a cleft palate has reopened the debate about disabled babies being aborted up to birth. Nuala Calvi reports

Reverend Joanna Jepson's pretty face made most of the Sunday supplements after she spoke out against the late abortion of a foetus with a cleft palate. The media outrage focused on the fact that someone looking like Rev Jepson – who herself had corrective surgery for a facial disfigurement – could have been aborted for being “disabled”.

But it also served to remind the public that while the normal limit for abortions is 24 weeks gestation, we allow the abortion of disabled foetuses up until birth.

It is the legacy of a 1990 amendment of the abortion laws, which lowered the acceptable time period for

abortions on these grounds – ground E – would lead to terminations for “minor” reasons such as hair lip, cleft palate or club foot. He was accused of scaremongering.

“The case Joanna Jepson has highlighted is an example of exactly the kind of case I said in 1990 would occur,” he says.

The most common reasons for abortions at all stages under ground E in 2002 were “congenital malformations”. Apart from cleft lip and palate, these included malformations of the cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, respiratory and urinary systems, and of the eye, ear, face, neck and skin. Chromosomal abnormalities, such as Down's syndrome, were the next most common.

says Tony Kerridge, of women's advice and support charity Marie Stopes, himself disabled.

He says the law was written to allow doctors to use their discretion. Otherwise, judges would decide what is or is not a severe disability, and that would lead to discrimination.

Doctors in the field seem to agree with him. They feel the law is too blunt a tool to decide on such a complex issue.

But Rev Jepson says promises were made when the bill was passed that it would not stretch to babies with cleft palate being aborted.

“This leads to the question of how we discriminate against disabled people in the womb. You can't try to build a non-discriminatory society and then screen out disabled people before they are born. It's saying, ‘let's predict how meaningful this baby's life is going to be’, and you can't do that – you have no idea.”

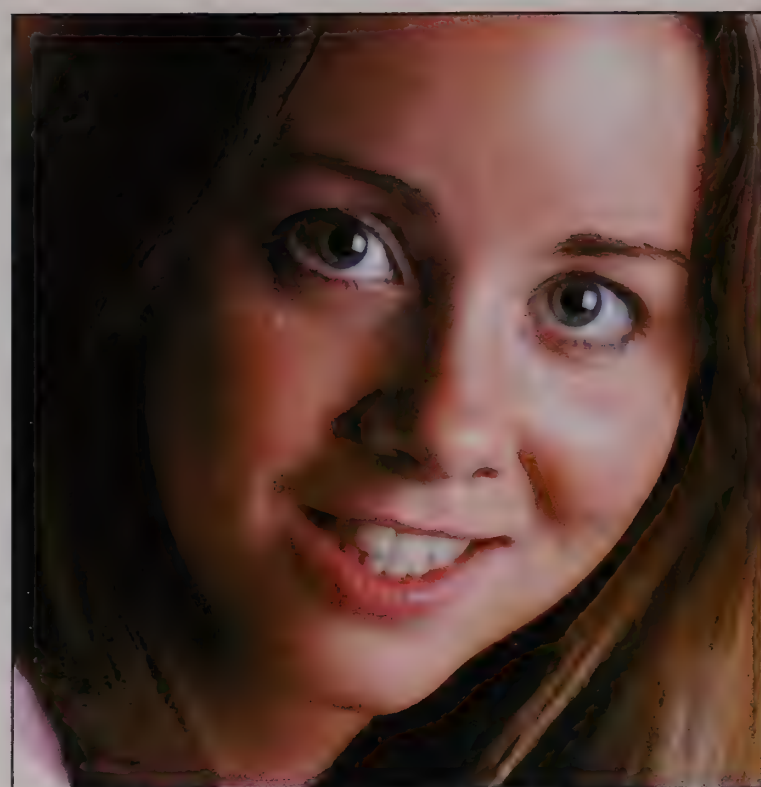
Foetal medicine experts say the abortion statistics can be misleading. A recording of cleft palate, for example, may be a symptom of other severe problems, such as Edward's syndrome, which usually causes the death of the baby soon after birth. And while a skin complaint might seem an outrageous reason for a late abortion, it could refer to a lethal condition such as Epidermolysis Bullosa Lethalis, which causes the baby to die from moisture loss.

Prof Peter Soothill, a specialist in maternal and foetal medicine at the University of Bristol, says: “The majority of these very rare cases are when the foetus has no chance of surviving long at all. They would never be for mild problems unless there was also a substantial risk of a related, complex problem.

“A late abortion is something everybody involved, including the obstetrician, finds very difficult, and a multidisciplinary team, including geneticists, would be involved to speak to the parents about the condition.”

But why are there late abortions of foetuses with conditions like spina bifida or Down's syndrome?

Prof Soothill says people with spina bifida can now have a “very good prognosis” but some cases can be associated with complications like severe



Whose life is it anyway? Rev Joanna Jepson (above), Christopher Mitchell (below), who was diagnosed with Edward's syndrome and his family today (inset) with Iona, 4, and Marina, 2



hydrocephalus, a swelling of the brain and head towards the end of the pregnancy, which can cause extreme brain damage.

With Down's, other problems can develop in late pregnancy, such as hydrops fetalis, a lethal swelling throughout the body and skin.

“Some serious conditions only develop late. For example, in microcephaly, the head may grow normally until 26 weeks and then stop growing so the baby can be born with a tiny head and severe brain injury.”

The law could have saved some babies' lives, according to Prof Soothill. Rather than terminate because of a risk of later complications associated with a condition, parents have sometimes chosen to wait and see, knowing they have the option of a late abortion.

Some parents, despite knowing their baby will only live a short time, choose to go ahead with the birth anyway.

Alan and Verity Mitchell's son Christopher was diagnosed with Edward's syndrome and died after six-and-a-half months. “Some children with Edward's survive for a day or two but in our case, Christopher lived quite long,” says Alan. “We felt that even if he's only going to live a few days, who are we to deny him that chance? In the end, he died of a heart problem, but he had

a very good quality of life for six months. If we'd had an abortion in pregnancy, he wouldn't have had that life.

“Christopher had a major impact on all people who met him, and he changed our views on disability. Three hundred people came to his funeral – I don't think I'll get that at mine. Whether it's two days or 80 years, a life has value.”

Meanwhile, Rev Jepson's lawyers, Coningsby's Solicitors, are gearing up for their high court action, expected to start by the spring, which will challenge a police decision not to investigate a doctor who performed a late abortion for a cleft palate. If successful, they could set a legal precedent that such a condition cannot be regarded as a “serious handicap”; it could also lead to more information being required on forms authorising abortions.

Paul Conrath, of Coningsby's Solicitors, hopes the case goes even further. “It could lead to the point when all unborn children have a right to life and the law is discriminatory and needs to be struck down. It's probably ambitious, but if there was ever a case to do it, this is it.”

**‘We felt that even if he's only going to live a few days, who are we to deny him that chance?’**

terminations generally, but included a clause making them legal up to birth if there is a risk of the baby being “seriously handicapped”. The law, though, does not state which conditions are “serious”.

The crossbench peer Lord (David) Alton, an MP at the time, argued that allowing late

Rev Jepson's critics point out that late abortions account for only a “handful” of the total: 0.1 per cent in 2002, or 114, almost all under ground E, and that statistics do not tell the whole story behind individual cases. “It's not up to Rev Jepson to speculate on the level of an individual's disability,”

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ILLUSTRATIONS: CLARE CURTIS

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Mary Wilkinson, Disability Now,  
6 Market Road, London N7 9PW,  
minicom: 020 7619 7332,  
fax: 020 7619 7331,  
e-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



## End of NHS dental care

I am facing a problem which I am sure is widespread.

I have polyarthritis, IBS and diverticulitis and qualify for full help with prescriptions and dental costs. However, my dentist has now gone completely private, along with every other dentist in Stafford.

The nearest NHS dentist is in another town.

For emergencies I can, theoretically, get help locally, but general maintenance must either be paid for at my current dentist or I face a difficult time travelling.

What happened to full help? What happened to NHS dental care for the poor and infirm?  
**G Simmonds**  
Stafford

## Spastics News February 1984

### From "A gap to be filled"

The trouble with the dental service for adult handicapped\* people is not that it has gone wrong; it never existed. Only in the last six years has some attempt been made to assess their needs and cater to them.

The Community Dental Service (CDS) has always had a statutory obligation to provide free care for children – hence the school dental health programme, which includes mentally and physically handicapped children. As the number of children in the population declined, and their teeth improved, there was thought to be some financial slack which could be taken up by handicapped adults.

So, in 1978, the CDS was given discretionary powers to provide care for those handicapped adults who could not get care elsewhere. The remit was vague and imposed no statutory obligation. Some district health authorities have been more active in carrying out and promoting their responsibilities than others.  
*\*apologies for this. The social model hadn't reached us – Editor*

**Lewis is a happy sociable boy who is affectionate and enjoys the attention of other people. Lewis needs respite care for alternate weekends and occasional holidays.**



Lewis has epilepsy, asthma and hydrocephalus and he has bilateral shunts in-situ. Because of this Lewis requires supervision at all times to maintain his safety. Lewis has a wheelchair and uses a walking frame at school, and usually gets where he wants on his own. He is able to communicate his needs both verbally and using Makaton signs.

Lewis has started to use bad language when frustrated but carers can deal with this by speaking to him quietly but firmly. Lewis loves group work especially music and singing. He is well liked by those who know him.

Lewis needs a single carer or couple where he would be the only or youngest child. Initially he requires a regular respite placement but it is envisaged that this would develop into a long term placement. Foster carers would receive a generous allowance and support.

To find out more about Lewis please call

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## Sticks and stones

I really do think these touchy disabled people (*DN* January) are getting as silly as all the other "offended" people. And I am disabled.

Do words really matter? Sticks and stones, etc.

There are more important things to think about and to do, and the Prime Minister has more than most of us to contend with.

I hate the expression "get a life", but, really, do get a wider horizon, and pass it on to the people who complained to you.  
**Eunice Wilson**  
London SW6

## No more travel tokens in Berkshire

In the summer, my local council, West Berkshire, advertised the fact that they had lost details on their database of people eligible for travel tokens.

My son, who has a walking disability, has been receiving them for two years. The published leaflet stated they were for over 60s and all ages with a registered walking disability.

When I tried to get this year's tokens, I was told my son should never have received them as he would be eligible for half fare on the bus. I pointed out he used a wheelchair and there were no low rider buses in our town. I used the tokens when travelling by taxi.

## BE are the best

I have been disabled for eight years and have flown more since being so than ever before.

I've used British Airways, BMI and British European (BE). Of those, BE have proved themselves superb at handling disabled customers.

From the pilots through to the check-in staff, they have always been more than accommodating and helpful, as well as often being quite interested in my problems and how they could help me better.

Although the other two airlines were okay, the differences in attitude were still quite obvious to me.

I do resent the fact that other UK carriers offering cheaper flights would be unlikely to accommodate my needs, so I feel somewhat forced to use the mainstream airlines. But, given the excellent attitude of BE, I doubt I would use anyone else.

**Romayne Wright**  
Belfast, N. Ireland

## Teen spirit



by Chris Johnson

A group of young carers from Cambridgeshire spent last year planning and producing a video and information pack called *Do U Care*, about what life is like as a carer.

The fast-paced, 15-minute video, aimed at secondary schools, was produced with a grant from Connect Youth, part of the British Council.

As a young carer myself, and a member of the group, I think the video has great potential. I think there is nothing of this kind about young carers out there and I hope it will open the door for others to produce similar materials.

I am 18 and until a month ago was a carer for my Mum who has long-term depression.

It was only from friends that I found out my situation was different from theirs. I cooked many meals for myself and some for my Mum and sister as well. Some of the time I was just there to listen, or I helped my Mum remember things to do, like taking her medicine.

I had to grow up a lot quicker than others my age, as I had more responsibility, but I don't see this as a bad experience so much as a life experience. I have learned a lot from it.

Our group spent the summer filming the video with the help of a professional company. They taught us techniques for filming, as well as editing the footage for us.

Part of my role in making *Do U Care* was to do some filming, which was good fun.

The video features young carers meetings run by Crossroads, and follows the daily lives of two young carers, showing what they do at home as carers, and what they enjoy doing when they're out. It also features a summer holiday that some of the carers went on. *The video and pack will be released on 28 January. For more details, please email video@youngcarer.org.uk, or telephone (01480)458565.*

## back chat



● The patron saint of disabled drivers is keeping a close eye on London. Mayor Ken Livingstone heard from a disabled woman at his Disability Capital Conference about her own personal miracle. Brent Council had refused to move a car left in her disabled parking bay for six months, as it displayed a Blue Badge and tax disc. Then, one night, someone smashed the car window and took the documents. Within days, the council had plastered the car with parking tickets and towed it away.

● The Mayor is not exactly known for his love of

journalists. Asked about the media's use of offensive terms such as "nutters" and "bonkers", he suggested a boycott of offending publications. Which national newspapers would there be left to read?

● Talking of nationals, The *Independent's* David Lister asked: "Who are these sensitive flowers who find stairs intimidating?" and blamed arts administrators for dreaming up "ever more outlandish reasons" to increase access. As *DN* reader Alan Steadman remarks, try travelling round London in a wheelchair, Mr Lister.



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The "Bekker" Voyager is a spacious five seater with a rear station measuring 44" by 30" to accommodate a wheelchair seated passenger or unoccupied scooter. If the Voyager is not quite big enough for your needs, there is the larger Grand Voyager with a rear station measuring 54" by 30". There are eleven models in a choice of seven colours and prices start as low as £19,998 for the Voyager 2.4SE, rising to £32,076 for the Grand Voyager 3.3 Limited XS, which is only £76 more than the recommended retail price of a non-converted one.

This roomy and most comfortable five seater can be reverted back into a seven seater if wheelchair passenger or scooter space is not required.



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## The Bekker Kangoo



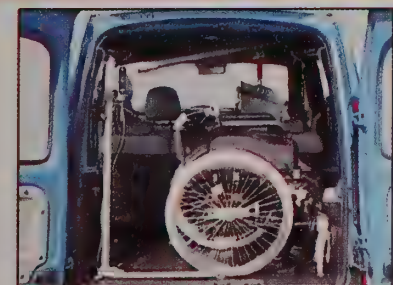
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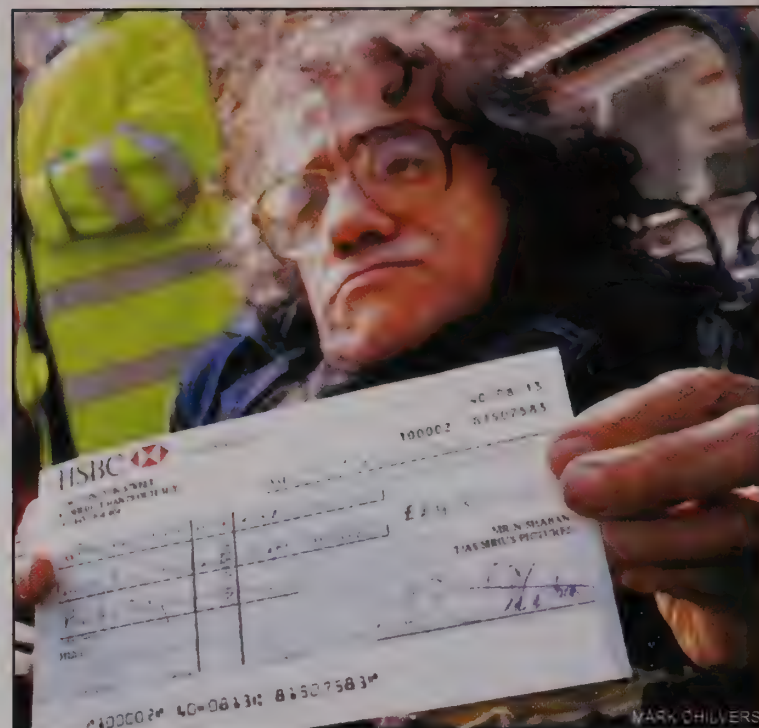
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Stage right: Crowds at London's widely acclaimed Liberty 2003 and (right) actor Nabil Shaban returning a £24,800 EYDP cheque in protest over the war in Iraq

# Mixed verdict for European year



2003 was the European Year of Disabled People. But did it make any difference? Did it impact on your life? Did anyone actually care? Lucy Glynn found views were mixed

**T**he European Year of Disabled People (EYDP) officially ended in December, but behind the fancy logo, has it actually done anything to improve disabled people's rights?

The year ended on a high note with the announcement by the Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou that she will include a European disability directive as part of new anti-discrimination legislation. Details of the directive have not been finalised, but it should prevent discrimination of disabled people when using public transport, education and when accessing goods and services.

One of the complaints about the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons was that disabled people weren't actively involved and the government needed to put this right.

Projects funded included a £10,000 grant to the Asian People with Disabilities Alliance for an awareness-raising booklet and £50,000 to the Federation of Disability Sport Wales to recruit over 500 volunteers to increase sporting opportunities for disabled people.

The Birds of Paradise Theatre Company was also given a £50,000 grant to tour Scotland with its awareness-raising production. Without the money, administrator Alison

## Hit or miss?

### Successes

- Promised European disability directive
- Renaming the year in the UK from the European Year of People with Disabilities to the European Year of Disabled People
- Liberty 2003 festival – London's one-day disability arts festival is now an annual event
- Rights into Action 2003, the first international congress of young disabled people held in Wales
- £2.3 million for events organised and run by disabled people for disabled people

### Could have done better

- Lack of coverage by national press, TV, radio
- National launch of EYPD bus in inaccessible venue in south east London and general lack of bus publicity
- The Brent Association of Disabled People's EYPD event which was cancelled at the last minute after the venue had no accessible emergency exit

**'If you asked 100 people in the street if they knew it was the European Year of Disabled People, probably 99 wouldn't' – Bert Massie, DRC chair**

The year also ended well in the UK, when the government finally published its draft disability bill. But this is something Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission, says "would probably have been published anyway" and he admits that most members of the public were unaware of EYPD. "If you asked 100 people in the street if they knew it was the European Year of Disabled People, probably 99 wouldn't," he says.

This can partly be put down to the government's decision to fund small-scale projects run by disabled people for disabled people rather than financing a general awareness raising campaign.

McMenemy says they could only have performed in Glasgow. Despite this, she is critical of the year.

"The event took place within the disabled community. I'd hate to see money taken away from projects but to make a difference there needs to be more publicity."

Disability rights activist Simone Aspis agrees. "You wouldn't know it ever happened. I would have liked to have seen events that directly influenced policy," she says.

The problem, according to Rachel Hurst, director of Disability Awareness in Action, is that raising awareness without TV coverage is practically impossible and

getting on TV is impossible without celebrities, who are too expensive.

Another problem, she says, was too much interference from the European Commission. "The Commission would not allow anybody to make money from the year. We gave some t-shirts away, but because we couldn't sell any, we ran out and didn't have the financial



Top table: (above from left) Maria Eagle MP, Richard Howitt MEP, Rachel Hurst and Paul Holmes MP at the launch of the Disabled Person's Parliament; (below) the launch of the EYDP bus's journey around Europe and (top) EYDP show in Bristol



backing to make any more."

She also says civil servants were not the right people to be running what needed ideally to be a high profile marketing campaign.

Similarly, with just one million Euros to fund a year-long European bus tour, UK bus coordinator Anne Pridmore had her work cut out.

"I started from a position that many disabled people in the UK saw [the bus] as a waste of time. My philosophy was, 'It's here, let's make the best of it.'"

But with just 3,000 people visiting the bus in the UK and only a few of them disabled, Pridmore says the government should have done more to promote the year. She is also



unimpressed by disabled people's organisations who were critical of the bus and thinks they could have done more to help make it a success.

"We advertised in the disability press. Organisations had to put a bid in to have the bus in their area. It would have been nicer if every organisation had been involved."

"Looking back at the video I made of the bus's journey, I can definitely say I gave it my best shot. But when you ask the general public, 'What did you know about the European Year of Disabled People?', their expression is one of polite indifference."

Ironically, while on tour, Pridmore only had seven showers in 32 days and two of them were at home because of the shortage of accessible showers in UK hotels. "Even when there's an accessible shower, there's no chair. In this, the European Year of Disabled People, they should have all bought a chair."

Alison Julal was appointed EYPD coordinator in London and worked with disabled people's organisations to promote EYPD. Julal says one of the best things about the year was that it empowered local organisations to put on events and organise meetings. She picks out the Liberty 2003 one-day festival in Trafalgar Square, which attracted thousands of people, as one of the year's highlights. "It showcased professional disabled performers and provided an arena for large numbers of disabled people to get together," she said.

Writer and musician Mat Fraser who compered the Liberty festival, said the event was important because for the first time thousands of people could see competent and professional disabled performers.

So what now?

Hurst says one of the best things to come out of the year in the UK was building alliances at a grass roots level between disabled people's organisations, local authorities and other local groups. "I think any awareness-raising effort is positive. It doesn't change the world but it moves things along."

Andy Rickell, director of the British Council of Disabled People, was more positive. His fear that the year would be a "junker for the great and the good and disabled people would be sidelined" was not realised. He says the projects were a success, especially the disabled people's parliament which he helped organise with a £50,000 grant.

But Aspis is critical of the way the parliament was run

**'I think any awareness-raising effort is positive. It doesn't change the world but it moves things along' – Rachel Hurst, director, Disability Awareness in Action**

and because delegates didn't receive any expenses for attending it or for future work.

"How can you expect to run surgeries without funding? If it's something else, don't call it parliament. It has to have the same influence as parliament."

To make the parliament a success, it's crucial that there's

follow-up work and Rickell would like to see similar grants available in the future.

It's too soon to judge how successful the year was, according to Bert Massie. "You need to look back in five years' time. Disabled people are not disabled for a year. They are disabled for the rest of their

lives. The battle goes on."

The year hasn't achieved full civil rights for disabled people, but Maria Eagle, Minister for Disabled People, says it has laid the foundations for a positive shift in attitudes to disability.

And as disabled people know only too well, the only way to ensure the year fulfils its potential and leads to change is to keep up the pressure and keep campaigning.



Mat Fraser at Liberty 2003

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Blue with a view: Disabled fan at Walkers Stadium in Leicester

# Making a stand

Disabled football fans have never had it better. There are more accessible spaces in more stadiums than ever before. But all too often, clubs are scoring own goals by placing wheelchair spaces behind standing fans. Lee Humber reports

One result of the vast amounts of money flowing into Premier League football over the past decade has been an improvement in the level of facilities for all football fans, including fans with disabilities.

New legislation under the Disability Discrimination Act 2004 along with an increasingly sophisticated disabled supporters movement means fans' views are being taken more seriously than ever before.

Most Premier League clubs have disabled supporters' clubs whose opinions are at least acknowledged by clubs, if not always actively sought.

Karen Lester of the Birmingham City Disabled Supporters' Club explained how her organisation has been able to build links with the club. "Each disabled area in the ground has a representative for day-to-day match day problems. We organise party nights and players' forums. Birmingham City gives us free access to a club room for our meetings,

which is completely accessible to people with all disabilities." Similar arrangements exist at other clubs.

At country-wide level, the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS) is now a firmly established source of expertise valued by football associations across Europe. It has been heavily involved in the production of a new booklet by the Football Stadium Improvement Fund that gives advice on improving access to English clubs and highlights the statutory requirements they are bound by.

Of the current 20 teams in the English Premiership, seven

averaging around £130 to £150, plus a range of deals for people accompanying disabled fans. A number of new features – like catering kiosks with low level counters and pre-order delivery services for half time refreshments – have been developed, particularly at the new grounds.

However, not everything in the Premier League is rosy, and a number of key problems continue to spoil and sometimes ruin the football-going experience for disabled fans.

New fans trying to find out what facilities are available or where to buy tickets can face difficulties finding even the most

**Often, the good work achieved by clubs in providing a greater number of accessible spaces for disabled fans is undermined by lack of consideration of the view available.**

have built completely new grounds with the kind of access provisions you would expect from new buildings. Fulham, without a ground to call their own, and newly promoted Portsmouth bring up the rear in terms of facilities offered, while most other clubs have made at least some general improvements.

For fans with disabilities, Manchester United lead the way by a mile in terms of overall match-going experience. Entrance to games is free, and in the club's superbly equipped Ability Suite (supported by the RNIB), fans have, as one of them said, "our very own prawn sandwich section", with low counter catering kiosks and large TV screens. The supporters' club – which has great links to the club itself – decides on ticket and parking space allocation, but, unsurprisingly, tickets are hugely oversubscribed.

Blackburn Rovers offer the highest number of places for disabled fans, as well as other benefits, in a well considered package. Arsenal is the only other club to offer tickets free of charge, although they lag behind in terms of match day provision. The club has pledged to put this right when – or if – their new stadium is built.

All of the league's other clubs offer price concessions on season and match day tickets with season ticket prices

basic of access information. Why this should be in the age of the web is a mystery. Details of ground accessibility and ticket prices are often buried among obscure hard-to-find pages, with only Blackburn Rovers offering a direct link to access information from their home page.

Very few clubs operate a minicom system for fans with hearing impairment and a minority of clubs have a specific disability liaison officer, Leicester City and Charlton Athletic being two of the stronger examples.

Segregation of fans with disabilities is another concern. Pat Stack, a Spurs fan who has visited stadiums throughout the country, thinks clubs could do much more to integrate fans.

"Modern football grounds should avoid segregating disabled supporters into one or two pens, but rather have disabled areas dotted around different parts of the ground so disabled fans feel truly integrated. I know of no ground that does this at the moment."

Most Premier League clubs at least make provision for disabled fans to sit with carers, friends and family, so we have clearly moved on from the days when disabled supporters sat alone in lines of blue cars at the side of the pitch. But full integration still seems a long way off.

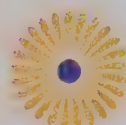
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## Access details for Premiership clubs

	Disabled parking	Disabled toilets	Wheelchair spaces	Facilities for visually impaired visitors	Facilities for hearing impaired visitors
 Arsenal	None on site	3	92 home, 10 away	35 receivers for home supporters, 10 for away	No specific arrangements
 Aston Villa	£5 on site	directly behind wheelchair area	61 home, 8 away	portable receivers for hire when available	No specific arrangements
 Birmingham City	35 spaces	10	66 home, 22 away	6 home headsets, 6 away	No specific arrangements
 Blackburn Rovers	50 spaces	14	262 home, 20 away	20 home headsets, 2 away	No specific arrangements
 Bolton Wanderers	on site charged parking available	adapted facilities in all areas of ground	150 home, 33 away	30 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Charlton Athletic	41 home, 2 away	4 throughout ground	96 home, 7 away	20 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Chelsea	minimal on site	adapted facilities in all areas of ground	74 home, 5 away	headsets available	Induction loop
 Everton	48 spaces	6	83 home, 13 away	50 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Leeds	100 spaces	8	110 home, 8 away	26 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Liverpool	15 spaces	6	71 home, 8 away	50 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Manchester United	94 home, 10 away	8	94 home, 10 away	20 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Middlesbrough	84 spaces	15	100 home, 15 away	Catered for throughout stadium	No specific arrangements
 Newcastle United	71 spaces	in main concourse only	197 home, 8 away	22 allocated seats	No specific arrangements
 Preston North End	spaces in main car park can be booked	2	35	2 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Southampton	on site for season ticket holders	in main concourse only	100	50 headsets	Induction loop
 Tottenham Hotspur	none on site	5	49 home, 7 away	6 headsets	No specific arrangements
 Wolverhampton Wanderers	46 spaces	10	84	Unlimited	No specific arrangements

No details currently available for Fulham, Manchester City and Leicester City. Figures provided by NATS and online in full at the excellent [www.nads.org.uk](http://www.nads.org.uk)

concern that clubs themselves acknowledge. Only Manchester United guarantee a parking space less than 100 yards from the ground for every match day wheelchair user. Darren Bernstein, of Charlton Athletic, outlines the sort of difficulties experienced by the rest of the clubs. "Parking is a problem for us. We have a total of 43 spaces. That is a lot for an old stadium in a residential area, but we would like to have more."

Some disabled fans have resorted to getting taxis to and from games, but this can have its own pitfalls. "Getting taxis to a ground is expensive but possible," said one fan. "But if you try to get a cab after a game, you'll wait forever."

Until parking provision is properly addressed by clubs, and sufficient spaces or alternative methods of travel to grounds are provided, accessibility remains a very real problem for disabled supporters, new and old.

Perhaps the most persistent and frustrating issue is ensuring a decent view of the game once you are inside the stadium. Sightlines have caused

debates throughout the current phase of stadium improvement. Often, the good work achieved by clubs in providing a greater number of accessible spaces for disabled fans is undermined by lack of consideration of the view available.

If they are able, football fans from every country in the world stand up when something exciting happens. It would be unnatural if they didn't. Some clubs provide stewards to patrol the stands attempting to keep supporters in their seats. But a line of people in orange bibs waving their arms up and down is as distracting as others standing. And why shouldn't fans express themselves in this way if they feel like it and if they can? Waving stewards are largely ineffective, and as NADS repeatedly point out, the only real solution is for clubs to provide raised-level platforms.

Clubs are beginning to realise these are essential if wheelchair users in particular are to enjoy matches on an equal par with non-disabled supporters. According to NADS, after a long

consultation between disabled supporters, football authorities and architects, there is now a "much better understanding" of the issues involved in the sightlines debate.

The findings of the consultation are in a new Football Foundation guide\*, which sets standards for seating, entrance design and car parking (DN December). It is hoped the standards will be used as a blueprint for future stadium improvements.

There are still an alarming number of clubs in the Premier League that persist in claiming the view they provide is perfectly adequate – without taking into account the obstructions caused by standing fans. In these clubs, change requires both will and money, and in today's financially fragile football climate, neither of these things can be taken for granted.

Disabled supporters need to stay vigilant and vocal if recent improvements in the football watching experience are to continue.

\* Accessible Stadia, [www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)

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# 'I don't see an autistic child: I see Brett'

Former *London Tonight* presenter Fiona Farrell was told by doctors that her autistic son Brett would never speak, show affection or make friends. But they were wrong on all three counts.



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People ask me what it's like being the parent of an autistic child. There's no easy answer. The truth is that it's heartbreaking, devastating, hard work, fun and immensely rewarding.

The heartbreak started when I discovered Brett was slightly odd; not quite right. It hit me when I was at a children's birthday party and picked up a brightly coloured toy. Every child in the room stopped and looked at the toy; some pointed at it, some smiled, others talked – all except Brett who sat silently in the corner of the room, spinning the wheels of a train, completely ignoring me.

Brett did not behave like other children. He seemed locked in his own little world – my husband, Brian, and I wondered if he was deaf. When Brian returned from work, he would shout out, "Daddy's home", but Brett wouldn't acknowledge him; he didn't even look up. At the same time, he was hyperactive – running round the room, climbing on furniture. He spoke in jargon and had poor eye contact. Temper tantrums were frequent and when he got really distressed, he would bang his fist into his head. I found this particularly hard to deal with, and would clasp his hands in mine and say over and over again, "No Brett, no hit".

It was devastating when the doctors sat my husband and me down and told us our only child was on the autistic spectrum. They said Brett might never speak, never show any affection, would never be creative or imaginative, go to university, get married or have any friends. Everything they said was negative, and, looking back, handled badly. They offered us no hope.

I experienced a range of emotions: disbelief, guilt, anger and absolute sadness. Why my child? But after those emotions, came the realisation that life goes on. There was no reason why our son was different, no one was to blame. Our little boy needed all the love and help we were capable of giving.

So autism became the focus of my life. I went online and read everything I could about the condition. I rang the National Autistic Society, which was the best thing I could have done. They understood what I was going through and offered me well informed advice. They gave me back my hope.

And that gave my son hope. I started teaching Brett eye-contact, clapping his head in



Adorable and affectionate: Brett with mum Fiona

my hands, and turning him to look at me, saying over and over again, "Look at Mummy, look at Mummy". My husband and I gave him encouragement and praise. Eventually his eye contact improved.

Teaching him to point was important too. We would make his hand into a fist, extend his finger and point at things saying slowly what it was. Soon, his first words came, and then more general speech,

are lucky that he is capable of learning, and we were also lucky to get him into the brilliant Haywards School in Chelmsford, where they understand the nature of autism, and where he has made such amazing progress.

Yes, he still likes routines, he still has obsessions, but he is the most adorable, affectionate little boy who has made me look at the world in a different light. When we look at Brett

**"Who's a tired little bunny?", I asked and he replied, "I am not a bunny, I am a boy"**

improving week by week. I was fortunate to be able to afford a great speech therapist, and slowly our little boy stopped the tantrums and started interacting with us.

The journey has been – and remains – an immensely rewarding and fun one. Brett has a wicked sense of humour, is always smiling and is a joy to be with. He has become more Aspergers (towards the higher end of the autistic spectrum) as he grows older. He has a phenomenal memory, and can recite scenes from videos with the same intonation as the actors. He is honest and says it exactly as it is. He also takes everything literally. In the car once, he yawned. "Who's a tired little bunny?", I asked and he replied, "I am not a bunny, I am a boy". He is very logical, and very bright.

Brett loves being with other children and has learnt to deal with normal childhood outings, such as pantomimes, cinemas, holidays and eating out. We have discovered exactly what he is able to do, and what will distress him, so we can usually plan ahead. I know we

now we do not see an autistic child, we simply see Brett.

One of the things I have learnt over the past few years is that there are many unanswered questions about autism. One in every 86 primary school children in the UK has educational difficulties associated with autism, compared with one in 2,200 in 1998. We want to know why.

We want independent medical research undertaken by committees that are not chaired by people with shares in pharmaceutical companies.

We want a register of all the autistic people in the UK so that we can pool together all our information. Provision remains inadequate, and many autistic children do not receive the diagnosis, education or support to which they are entitled.

The government, doctors, teachers and members of the public do not realise the seriousness and extent of autism today. Parents of autistic children are asking that we change this situation.

*The National Autistic Society,*  
tel: 020 7833 2299,  
web: [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

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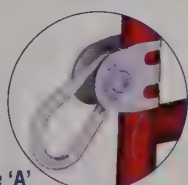
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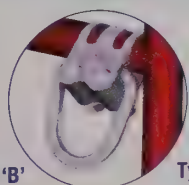
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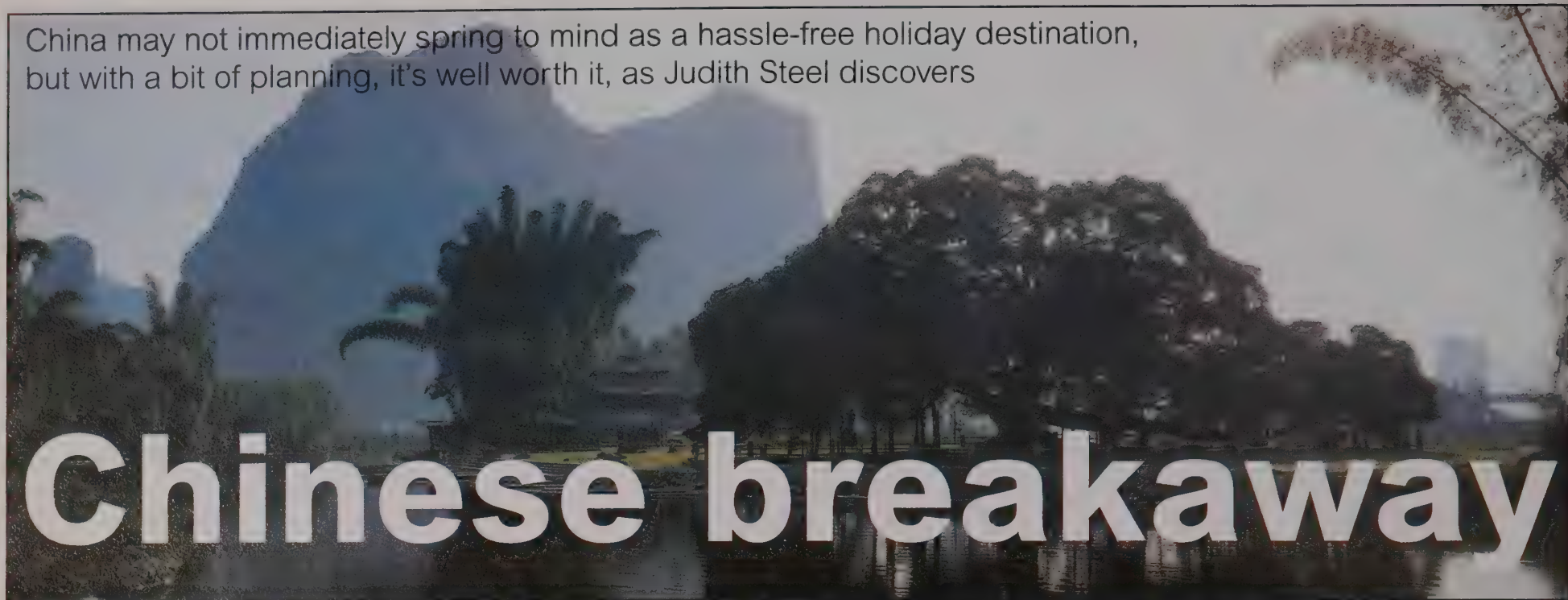
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Type 'B'



China may not immediately spring to mind as a hassle-free holiday destination, but with a bit of planning, it's well worth it, as Judith Steel discovers



The Big Banyan near Guilin which is over 1,000 years old

**M**y husband Michael and I had planned for many years to go on a trip to China. We phoned Saga after studying their brochure. As a result of a spinal cord tumour my legs are weak. I explained that I can walk about 100 yards slowly using a three-wheel walking aid, and that we have a small folding wheelchair which my husband can push. I also said that I realised it might not be possible to go up the steps to some of the places of interest, and that I might have to look at

the Great Wall rather than climb onto it. I said I would be happy to accept not seeing everything.

Saga said they would phone back in the next few days after consulting their medical team. A week later, no phone call, so I phoned again to be told they could not ask their medical team until they had our passport numbers and a deposit.

These were provided and, a week later, there was still no phone call. This time I phoned and insisted on speaking to the medical adviser, who told me I

could not possibly go as the bus drops people off at one point and picks them up at another. I would hold up the trip.

Downcast, I arranged to have the deposit returned and considered the next move.

I phoned all the travel companies advertising trips to China in the *Sunday Times*. One stood out as being particularly helpful. Audley Travel said that they could arrange for us to be met by a car and a guide in each of the places we wished to visit. They explained that there is a

site by the Great Wall where it is possible to go nearly all the way up in a gondola lift.

We flew on Air China to Beijing where we were met and taken to our hotel, which, like all other hotels, was pleasant, clean and wheelchair friendly. We visited The Forbidden City, The Summer Palace and many other interesting sights. We were taken round the old town by rickshaw and kindergarten children danced and sang for us.

The drive to the Great Wall was beautiful and by climbing

one short flight of steps I was able to walk along the wall with my walking aid. It was spectacular.

We visited Chengde further north, where I was taken up the steps to a monastery in a sedan chair, which was very exciting.

We then took the overnight train from Beijing to Xian, the old capital of China and home to an army of terracotta warriors. In 1974 a farmer accidentally came across the tomb of the first Qin emperor who died in 210 BC. He was

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The Forbidden City, Beijing (above), life-size warriors and horses at Xian (below), and Judith and husband Michael exploring the Great Wall (left).

buried with life-size terracotta infantrymen, archers, officers and horses. So far 6,000 of them have been reassembled and placed in their original ranks. Many more are still being excavated. It is an extraordinary sight, and it is possible to tour all round in a wheelchair. We were met by another guide and had a rather hurried rush around the famous warriors as our planned flight to Chongquin had been cancelled and we had to get an earlier one in order to catch the boat for a cruise down the Yangtze.

We had wanted to see the splendours of the Yangtze and the three gorges before they were flooded. (We took the trip in September 2002. The flooding began in March 2003, and will be flooded to the final level in 2008. But it is still possible to sail down the river.) We were not disappointed. I went ashore on all the day trips bar one and again had a lift in a sedan chair to look at the famous dam project. The work of pulling down the villages and re-housing 3 million people went on all day and night and was very impressive.

The country is changing and developing at great speed and seemed very entrepreneurial for a nominally communist system.

We were very impressed how beautiful many new buildings were and how much effort was taken to plant trees and flowers to make places look attractive.

The cruise boat was very comfortable and there was continuous entertainment, including kite flying, demonstrations of pearl making, Chinese painting and discussions about the new dam.

Then we went to the big international city of Shanghai, which is home to over 14 million people. The area around the harbour and old city is interesting and is a pedestrian wheelchair friendly area. It is also possible to go round the harbour in a boat. It was the least interesting place we visited, but very good for shopping.

From Shanghai to Guilin, where we went on a boat trip up the Li river, seeing the amazing mountains which rise straight up from the ground and the fishermen with cormorants catching the fish for them. Then back to Beijing and home.

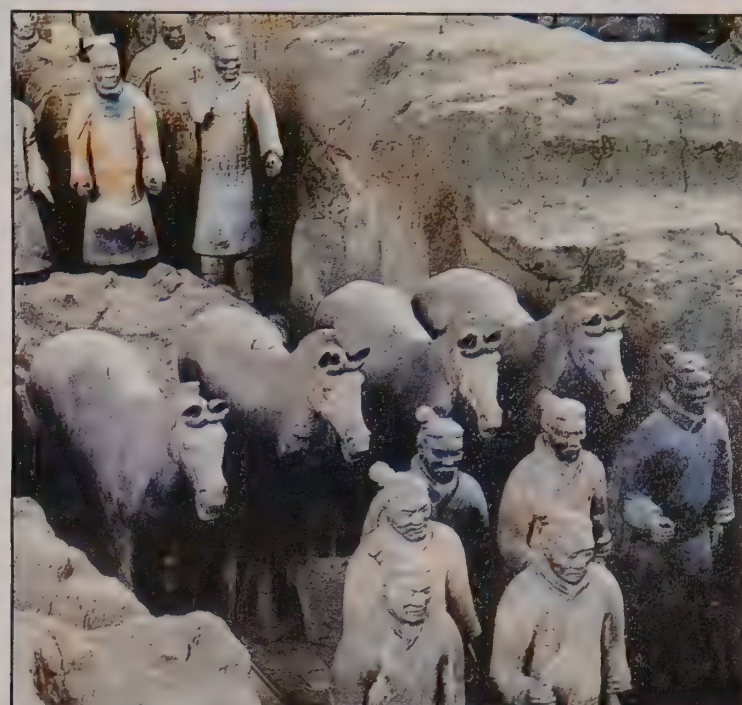
At each place a guide appeared as soon as we arrived. We did have a phone number in case there was a problem but it was not needed. We like Chinese food; it is very cheap. There was plenty of choice and we had no stomach upsets. The

toilets were clean. The Chinese were very friendly and helpful.

The only problem was that sometimes there were too many of them trying to be helpful.

They were inquisitive about my wheelchair and walker and I felt there was great potential for a business selling these in China. The children were delightful and wanted to push or ride in my chair. There was virtually no begging and we felt able to go wherever we wished.

Audley Travel could not be faulted (it has recently been voted top tour operator by readers of *Wanderlust* magazine) and, although expensive for 17 days (inclusive of flights, accommodation, guides, entrance fees and meals) it was well worth every penny.



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Spacious private villa with pool overlooking golf course. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms including wheel-in shower. Totally level throughout. For more information call **Debbie Wells on 01277 354313**



# Home for the holidays



## Stable Cottage, Norfolk

Gerry McCann writes:

Coming from a housing estate in Glasgow's east end, rural Norfolk offered a complete contrast. There were no street lights, pollution, or noise from the all-night pizza-delivery boys; just the gentle coaxing calls of the barn owls.

Even better was the accommodation. The owners of Stable Cottage have thought of everything. There are grab-rails in the roll-in shower rooms, a fully accessible kitchen and raised flowerbeds that we could all enjoy. Yet unlike some disabled-friendly holiday cottages, it doesn't feel clinical in any way. The



owners also go the extra mile to make you feel welcome – there was a tea-tray ready on arrival and fresh flowers by the beds.

For our family, holidaying can be tricky. My teenage son and daughter can get embarrassed by my Parkinson's, especially when I have involuntary movements, but being at Stable Cottage meant we had nothing to worry about. For the first time in years, we

were able to have a "normal" family holiday.

Jane Buckley writes:

There are wheelchair-friendly holidays – meaning the staff are friendly to wheelchair users, and there are wheelchair-friendly holidays – meaning the venue can be easily and independently accessed and enjoyed by a wheelchair user. Stable Cottage is an example of the latter, *par excellence*.

The setting is gorgeous and all facilities are within an easily wheelable distance.

I haven't found anywhere else in the country which is so absolutely enabling. It doesn't feel like an institutionalised, purpose-built "disabled" complex, but an ordinary holiday cottage – and that is the best thing about it. I can't wait to return.

• [www.norfolkdisabledfriendlycottages.co.uk](http://www.norfolkdisabledfriendlycottages.co.uk),  
tel: 01485 578603

Breaks in Britain are back in fashion and if you find accommodation which goes the extra distance to offer easy access and high levels of comfort, then you'll want to tell others about it. Five *DN* readers do just that

## Woodcombe Lodges, Minehead, Somerset

Eileen Blacker writes:

Surfing the web for a suitable UK holiday last year, I came across a site for Woodcombe Lodges near Minehead. I gave them a call, but their most suitable cabin did not have a fully accessible shower. The owner asked me what I needed, so I described the type of shower I have at home, which is a level access, fully tiled shower cubicle.

The owner said their builder was about to start two new lodges and maybe he could alter the plans. The builder said "no problem". Amazed at their flexibility, we booked a holiday.

A couple of months later, we received a phone call from them to say they had just had the properties inspected, but the access to the shower area was a little



tight for a wheelchair, so they couldn't receive full accessibility rating for the two units. They had talked to the builder and inspectors and had decided to knock the two buildings into one, creating a large, fully accessible unit, which they were happy to offer to us at the cost of the original.

I was truly impressed. Nicola and Andrew Hanson have literally bent over backwards to accommodate our needs and the disabled holidaymaker at large. A refreshing change from the "no room at the inn" stories you usually hear about.

• Tel: 01643 702789  
[www.woodcombelodge.co.uk](http://www.woodcombelodge.co.uk)

## Royal Deeside Scotland

4 superb self-catering cottages located on the banks of the River Dee. Designed and equipped to the highest standard with excellent facilities for disabled people, their families and friends. Please contact Crathie Opportunity Holidays Tel: 013397 42100 for more details or e-mail [info@crathieholidays.org.uk](mailto:info@crathieholidays.org.uk) [www.crathieholidays.org.uk](http://www.crathieholidays.org.uk) Category 1 Independent Wheelchair Travel

Heysham. Next to sea. Superb views. Perfect for wheelchairs, close to Lakes. Fully adapted for quadriplegic owner. Sleeps 6. Ceiling hoist, electric beds etc. Call Allan or Jan 01274 588142 for brochure.

## CAREWELL HOLIDAYS

Looking for a happy suitable holiday? We specialize in finding suitable accommodation for disabled persons of all abilities, age groups, and interests. We can also arrange assistance from health care professionals if required. For information on booking a holiday in accessible self-catering cottages, hotels, or farm house B&Bs please ring and speak to a holiday adviser. Tel: 01437 563565. email: [info@carewellholidays.co.uk](mailto:info@carewellholidays.co.uk) [www.carewellholidays.co.uk](http://www.carewellholidays.co.uk) To find out about listing your accommodation please contact us.

## The Algarve, Portugal

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**Cornwall – Nr Truro.**  
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**Brittany Cottage** to let. Adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson.** Tel (01924) 499220.

## CAREFREE HOLIDAYS SPAIN

Traditional Spanish farmhouse on the Costa Calida. Guesthouse or self catering. Fully wheelchair accessible. Heated pool. Open all year. Adapted minibus for airport transfers and excursions. For brochure Phone: 0034 968437010. email: [pbartlam@hotmail.com](mailto:pbartlam@hotmail.com) [www.carefreeholidayspain.com](http://www.carefreeholidayspain.com)

Woodhead Cottage  
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Cosy cottage by private woodland setting with attractive bird/wildlife. Great Highland holiday/touring base. Highest disabled category STB approved. 3 bedrooms, one with ensuite ceiling track/hoist to bed, toilet and bath. Level wheel-in chair shower, highly recommended by wheelchair user. Sleeps 6. For brochure contact: Ian & Catriona Shearer, tel: 01479 851298.

**CYPRUS – Paphos & Polis**  
Villas/cottages, some "disabled friendly" for 2-10 persons. Own pools. Phone Irene: 020 8440 6219. email: [irenehare@aol.com](mailto:irenehare@aol.com)

## Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages

3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with wheel-in shower room, 2 with airbaths. Mostly en-suite. On working farm - peaceful location, central for beaches and tourist attractions. Indoor heated swimming pool. Also B&B. More details and prices, contact: Rosemary on 01760 338797.

## Cornwall – Accessible Country Lodges

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Beautiful NEW well appointed luxury country cottages close to Lake District. Very disability friendly, groups, families, pets. Each sleeps 6+infants. 01524 62388 [www.langthwaitfarmcottages.co.uk](http://www.langthwaitfarmcottages.co.uk)

## Wye Lea COUNTRY MANOR ESTATE

Pretty gate lodge holiday bungalow, specifically adapted for accompanied disabled guests (inc. wheelchair users) on luxurious country manor estate (Ross on Wye). Restaurant, bar, extensive grounds. 4-wheel scooter for hire.

01989 562880  
[www.wylea.co.uk](http://www.wylea.co.uk)

## Western Canada!!

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## Willow Cottage – The Black Isle, 5 mins drive Inverness.

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Cockerham Sands is an established holiday venue situated by the side of Morecambe Bay that caters for the lovers of caravan holidays. The site is fully wheelchair accessible and contains all you need to make your holiday complete.

The caravan is fully adapted for wheelchairs and sleeps a maximum of nine people. For a brochure contact:

**Thrift Charitable Trust**

Shopmobility Furness, Oldham Street Car Park, School Street, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, Cumbria LA14 1EJ. Tel: 01229 434039.



## Gaer Cottages, Cardiganshire

Natalie Foan writes:

We first booked Gaer Cottages through my husband's employer, but loved it so much we have been back four more times as well as recommending it to friends.

Not only are the cottages clean and in good repair, they are also always well equipped – such a relief when cooking for the whole family. We have now stayed in four of the nine cottages in the complex and all are of the same high standard – some with ramps, widened doorways and lowered work surfaces.

We have never returned anywhere for repeat holidays before and friends ask us why we keep returning to Gaer, especially as we have to travel from Berkshire. There are many reasons.

The site is safe for the kids (Nathan, 7, and Cameron, 5, who is deaf – pictured right), with lots of open spaces for outdoor games, a small play park, a selection of farm animals and a games room with pool and table tennis. Our boys like playing by the stream, exploring and creating secret dens. The indoor pool is a major bonus. We use it twice a day; my older son even learned to swim there! There is a hoist and other equipment to allow full use of the facilities.

Venturing away from the cottages, there are so many things to do. We love the small beaches and coves nearby, visiting the seaside towns, touring the local mines and going to children's play parks and farms, as well as seeing the seals in Cardigan Bay.

Richard and Linda Burgess are fabulous, friendly hosts, always there to help and give information, without



being intrusive. They love to see everyone enjoying themselves and a highlight for our boys was helping Richard collect the eggs from the ducks and hens.

Although there are a number of cottages on one site, it is up to individual groups as to how much or how little they mix with the other visitors. Sometimes we have made some great friends there; at other times we haven't got to know the other families that much.

Richard and Linda Burgess (who previously worked with children with special needs) have been running Gaer Cottages since 1991.

They cater for all ages and all disabilities. Prices range from £200 to £950 (weekly), depending on the type of cottage, the number of bedrooms and the time of year.

● Gaer Cottages, Cribyn, Lampeter, Cardiganshire, SA48 7LZ, tel/Fax: 01570 470275, [www.selfcatering-in-wales.co.uk](http://www.selfcatering-in-wales.co.uk)



## Swallow Hotel, Gateshead

Lynda Sisson (inset) writes:

We thought you would like to know about the pre-season short break we had at the Swallow Hotel.

On booking the break, we mentioned I was a wheelchair user

and they gave us an executive room on the fifth floor which was very spacious and offered great views over Gateshead and Newcastle.

The staff were both friendly and accommodating, and the bathroom was wheelchair accessible, although a high-sided bath/shower was too difficult to manage. However, we have since discovered that there is a similar room on the fourth floor that has a fully accessible bathroom, with wider doors, lower features and handrails.

The public transport in the area is very accessible for a manual wheelchair user with escort. We particularly enjoyed the Metro rail system, travelling out to Whitley Bay on the

North Tyne coast and then all the way to Sunderland on the South Tyne coast – all in a day for just £3 each. The trains were easy to get on and off, and frequent. Our only gripe was the absence of staff at stations – which would have been annoying if we'd run

into any problems. We used the accessible "bendi-bus" to go non-stop from Gateshead to the Metro Centre.

Although central Newcastle is hilly, it is still relatively easy to get around and their fully accessible shopping centre was huge – a real bonus for wheelchair users.

We had an interesting visit to a museum in Sunderland about Sunderland life. There were some great hands-on exhibits among its three floors. Outside was a winter garden and park; all in the centre of Sunderland.

● Swallow Hotel, High West Street, Gateshead, NE8 1PE, tel: 0191 477 1105, [www.swallowhotels.com](http://www.swallowhotels.com)



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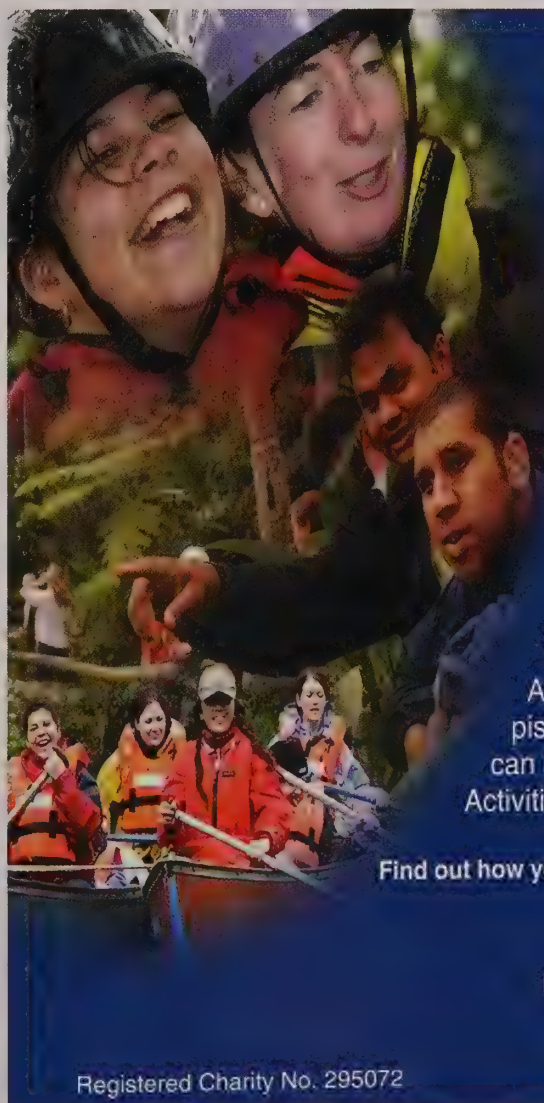
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Activity options include canoeing, sailing, rock-climbing, abseiling, archery, pistol shooting and arts and crafts. Daytrips using accessible minibuses can be arranged to the Eden Project, Bodmin Moor and local historical sites. Activities and daytrips can be arranged to reflect the National Curriculum.

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**0845 345 1971**

Email: [churchtown@wft.org.uk](mailto:churchtown@wft.org.uk) Web: [www.wft.org.uk](http://www.wft.org.uk)

Churchtown, Lanlivery, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL30 5BT.

Churchtown is part of the Winged Fellowship Trust.

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# Leading the pack

"You haven't lived until you have driven behind a team of huskies" say mushers. Today, anyone can experience the fun and thrills of running a team of sled dogs, as Verite Reily Collins discovers



Catherine Lewis leads the way



Rachel Scdoris

**A**s a child, Catherine Lewis from St Andrews in Scotland loved wolves. Now she keeps huskies as pets, exercising them – and herself – by dog sledding. She has spina bifida and is technically paraplegic, but this doesn't bother her: "I do have some movement in my legs, but because my balance is poor and my legs weak, I need to have a rig (a wheeled sled used when there is no snow) built specially. My rig is more like a chariot where you stand straight and use a tiller to steer – it's much more stable".

So do you start with a small team – say two dogs? No, according to Catherine "the more dogs you run the easier it is – the dogs do more work and you don't have to get off when going uphill."

"But these dogs are mentally strong so I always take a friend with me when training" – ever since she ended up 12 miles out in the forest, in a river, when the dogs decided to

go their own way.

In the States, being blind doesn't stop you from enjoying sledding. Rachel Scdoris, 18, from Redmond, Oregon, has congenital achromatopsia, but doesn't let this interfere with her sport. Guided by a friend on a skidoo, using two-way radio to warn of hazards, Rachel and her team are good enough to take part in long distance dog sled races covering hundreds of miles over several days. She has even been accepted as a contestant for the 1,000 mile ten day Iditarod – the Grand National of dog sledding.

So how can you take part? In Britain, the Siberian Husky Club encourages people to watch rallies all over the country. Their website has details of hundreds of events; just go, meet friendly people and ask questions! Then if you get hooked, Catherine says you can get a rig like hers for around £300; just make sure it has proper suspension so you don't get a shock up your spine.

Rigs can be adapted for whatever disability, and one of Catherine's friends used to mush in a full body caliper. She now runs in rallies up and down the country, and loves competing at the Royal Canine Sled Dog Rally every January in Aviemore, the largest rally in Europe.

When the family go winter sporting, they can mush on real snow (sadly scarce in Britain) in Scandinavia, Spain, France, Switzerland or Italy. Local tourist boards will tell you if there is a kennel offering rides.

I went to the Trentino region in Italy to see what all the



Rachel Scdoris at the starting line with her sponsor. Steve Mills from Atta Boy Dog Food.

excitement was about.

Sled dogs live to pull sleds – and harnessing a team of wildly excited dogs is hard work, as they wriggle and bark whilst their musher tries to hook them up.

Waiting to go out on my first sled trip, the noise was deafening. Then we were off – and suddenly there was complete silence, just the pad pad of the dogs' paws as they pulled the sled, with me sitting inside wrapped up in blankets, a musher steering behind. Snow sparkled and gleamed as we glided happily across the piste.

Following us up the valley, we could hear the dogs we left behind howling with frustration and dismay – Doctor Doolittle would have blushed at the canine four letter words hurled in our direction. Huskies are like humans: there is a pecking order in the pack, and those taken out most often are regarded as top dogs by their mates.

After my first ride I was

hooked – like Michael Schumacher. Every January, at the glitzy resort of Madonna di Campiglio, he and his teammates swop horsepower for dog power during Ferrari Week, having fun in the snow.

I couldn't wait to sign up for lessons as a musher, and was lucky enough to have Armen Khatchikian as my teacher, a veteran who has competed three times in the Iditarod.

Bringing his dogs back to Italy, he set up the Scuolo Italiana Sleddog-Progress in the Trentino Alps, near Paso Tonale. For trainees, it isn't just a school for sledders, but an entry into an eco-friendly way of life. As you enter there is a large noticeboard setting out Armen's philosophy. Rule 1: the dog is always right.

Armen's kennels are similar to many across the Alps, where it costs around £25 for an hour sitting in a sled, or running behind the dogs. A course of lessons works out at £160 to £270 for 3-5 days – about the same as hiring ski equipment and passes.

As your dogs run across the sparkling snow, you can't help getting hooked. You have been warned!

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Tourism for All Category 1  
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4 Pebblecombe, Adelaide Road, Surbiton, KT6 4LL.



## FACT FILE

Catherine Lewis,  
[www.wayreth.co.uk](http://www.wayreth.co.uk)

Husky Club,  
[www.siberianhuskyclub.com](http://www.siberianhuskyclub.com)

Austria, [www.austria.info/uk](http://www.austria.info/uk)

France, [www.franceguide.com](http://www.franceguide.com)

Italy, [www.trentino.to](http://www.trentino.to);  
[www.adamelloski.com](http://www.adamelloski.com)

Spain, [www.pirena.com](http://www.pirena.com)

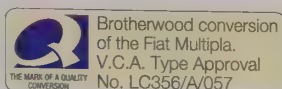
Switzerland,  
[www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)



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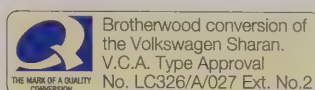
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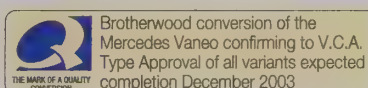
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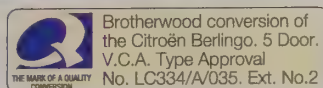
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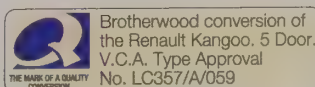
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## Film



## Stuck On You



From the people who brought you *Something About Mary* and *Dumb and Dumber* comes another supposedly gross-out comedy about a pair of conjoined twins. The Tenor twins, Bob (Matt Damon) and Walt (Greg Kinnear) run a fast food joint in Massachusetts. Their speciality is serving burgers and fries as quickly as possible to the predictably lovable small-town regulars, including Rocket, a "kooky little fellow" with a learning disability.

The more outgoing Walt, however, is dissatisfied with tossing burgers and, having appeared in local amateur dramatics, feels his calling lies in

Hollywood. So, after some persuasion, they both head for California.

On the way, they meet Cher, supposedly playing herself, who is trying to scupper a television detective series she is unhappy appearing in and that she wants to see bomb.

Chancing across the twins, she decides to include them in her show, but – surprise, surprise – it becomes a success.

Differences emerge between Walt and Bob, who also starts dating a Chinese woman over the internet without letting her know he is a conjoined twin.

I was expecting a truly offensive film, but it doesn't even have the guts to take that risk. The twins eventually have an operation to separate them and then get on with their own lives. But they find themselves unable to manage without each other. They can't, it seems,



Tame and dull: Greg Kinnear (left) and Matt Damon (right)

have their cake and eat it. The film contained nothing that shocked me, other than Cher's face, to which plastic surgery has given a striking resemblance to an expressionless, long-extinct reptile.

The plot has more holes than Swiss cheese. Does Bob cook? Does Walt act? Do we really care? There is a tragically misguided guest appearance

by Meryl Streep who looks utterly dumbfounded. Oh yes, and the learning disabled man thanks everyone for letting him act. Now, that's offensive.

The Farrelly twins have built a reputation on the bad taste factor, but this was too tame and dull to score. The minimal audience in the cinema seemed to agree.

Mike Shamash

## Theatre



## Me, Myself and I



Ian Ayckbourn and Paul Todd's black-comedy musical about a nervous breakdown first premiered at the room above the pub at the Orange Tree in 1983. It now returns to the bigger, more accessible new theatre across the road, but is still standard Ayckbourn fare.

Mary Yately is the oppressed and depressed housewife who finds herself about to be interviewed by a local reporter for winning a "Mum of the Year" award, thanks to a life spent talking only to small children or herself.

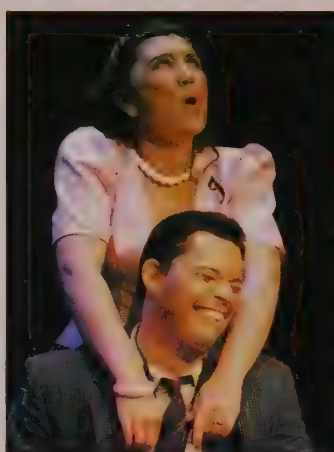
Her life has evolved into a continuous internal dialogue between the various threads of

her personality, and the myth of multiple personality madness is played out on stage with three different actresses playing the three different "Marys".

The law abiding "Me" struggles to keep under her belt the angry protestations of the cynical "Myself" and mischievous "I" as Mary gives her socially conditioned responses, causing her to unwittingly scold herself in front of the alarmed interviewer.

The situation is tinged with pathos as Mary and the reporter struggle to come to an acceptable version of her life story, only to find external reality unravelling itself under the personal and public manipulations of both individual and journalist.

Ayckbourn's play makes us consider the different faces and personas we all own, rather than the reality of



Stephanie Putson as "I" with Nigel Richards' reporter

mental illness, and does so with some hilarity. But despite polished performances, it lacks any truly memorable musical numbers and disappoints with an all-too-easy ending.

Nuala Calvi

• Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, until 7 Feb, tel: 020 8940 3633, [www.orangetreetheatre.co.uk](http://www.orangetreetheatre.co.uk)

## Coming up



Mind the Gap theatre, which works with learning disabled actors, is touring with a production of *Cyrano*, an adaptation of the classic tale of Cyrano de Bergerac. The tragicomedy of unrequited love and mistaken identities tells the story of poet and swordsman Cyrano, whose huge nose stops him getting what he really wants.

• From 12 Feb, Alhambra Studio, Bradford, then nationwide, [www.mind-the-gap.org.uk](http://www.mind-the-gap.org.uk)



The Horniman museum is currently holding *Sahara*, an exhibition of DN contributor Marion Bull's photographs. The pictures depict the landscape of the south Algerian Sahara, including Neolithic rock art in the Tassili N'Ajjer region.

• Until 4 March, free, 100 London Road, tel: 020 8699 1872, [www.horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk)



The Guildhall School of Music and Drama is staging *Monday After the Miracle*, by William Gibson. A sequel to *The Miracle Worker*, it follows the adult life of Helen Keller, who was born deaf and blind, exploring her relationship with Annie Sullivan, who taught her how to communicate.

• 12-19 February. Free, but limited availability, email: [tickets@gsm.ac.uk](mailto:tickets@gsm.ac.uk).

Lucy Howard

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## TV



Deep digging is required among all those "another chance to see" seasonal repeats, but there is good news from ITV1 with their fine example of neutral casting in Agatha Christie's *Poirot: Five Little Pigs*, which featured double amputee Aimee Mullins as a glamorous heiress in this intriguing drama. Her disability was not relevant to the storyline, was not mentioned in the *Radio Times* billing and she was featured in the opening sequence walking past camera in a low shot from the knees down. Marvellous.

BBC refugee Donal MacIntyre pitches up now on Five's *MacIntyre UK Undercover*, although he's so well known now, he can't buy so much as a bag of crisps undercover. His sidekick investigated more care home horror stories in *Who Cares for Gary?*, revealing that care workers can be taken on with fewer credentials than are demanded by your average Shopmobility provider (see page 5).

Kate Winslet and Judi Dench led us through the decline of acclaimed novelist Iris Murdoch with Alzheimer's in BBC2's screening of the feature film *Iris*, highlighting the difficulties of caring for someone affected by this mysterious disease.

A rare Sunday afternoon treat was provided by BBC1's dramatisation of Nina Bawden's children's novel *Carrie's War*, which gave a sensitive portrayal of Mister Johnny, a character with cp played well by actor Jamie Beddard.

Staying with cp, apparently actress Francesca Martinez gave a good performance in BBC1's *Doctors* as a young woman with cp tackling the prospect of leaving home for the first time to get married. I say apparently – I missed it because *Radio Times* didn't mention the storyline.

C4's rather prurient *Bodyshock* series dredged up poor old Joseph (John) Merrick in *Riddle of the Elephant Man*, using DNA to determine the true nature of his condition. Can't they just leave him to rest in peace?

Jane Shepherd





# Let's talk about sex

Even in the enlightened 21st century, disability and sex still don't mix happily. We must be braver if we are to end the taboo, writes psychotherapist Jane Gibbin

Whether we are in a relationship or not, sexual drive and desire is something we cannot wish away. Yet many disabled people are unable to exercise the same sexual choices as others. This is brought home to me on a daily basis as I listen to problems of people who need help in doing the kind of things non-disabled people take for granted. Behind each personal story is the question: why does society find the idea of sex and disability so difficult to cope with?

Not many of us were brought up to feel comfortable talking about sex or sexual feelings, especially to our parents. We live in a world where sex is portrayed as easy and commonplace, yet we often feel uncomfortable – and sometimes unable – to talk about it.

If you have a disability, you may have even more complex feelings about sex and sexuality. For a start, growing up with a disability often means being excluded from the traditional ways of learning about sex. Overhearing sex-talk, experimenting with others, watching late-night TV shows and films, chatting with friends – all these sources of knowledge, however inaccurate they can sometimes be – are frequently inaccessible to young people with a disability. Worse still, formal teaching and discussion may not be available to disabled young people, or if it is, may not address their specific needs.

There are many barriers for young disabled people wanting to explore their sexuality, especially if they are living with a parent, in a residential setting or living independently supported by a personal assistant. In order to grow and develop as sexual beings, you have to be able to explore and experiment sexually. How can this be possible in a world that wishes to pretend disabled peoples' sex lives don't – and shouldn't – exist?

There are also few positive sexual role models for disabled people. Sexual self-esteem soon plummets when none of the images in the media bear any relation to you. You are left thinking that sex only happens to the young, beautiful, wrinkle

free and non-disabled.

This negative view of disability and sexuality means sexual needs or problems can be difficult to talk about – even with health professionals. There are few services and there is still too little training in this area. Those services that do exist are under pressure and are often given low funding priority. The recent closure of SPOD, the organisation to aid sexuality for persons with disability, is a tragic example of this. If you have a sexual problem and a disability, the reality is that in most areas of the country there are simply no reliable sources of help – least of all in the NHS.

Finding a sexual partner can be extremely difficult. The

abuse. Many residential homes are terrified of criticism and losing social service contracts if they help residents to access sex workers – the only real alternative to a surrogacy service. Many worry that helping to arrange a visit from a sex worker could be construed as procurement, which is illegal, unlike paying for sex, which is not. Yet a non-disabled person would have no problem, legally speaking, in accessing such a service for themselves.

Many sex workers find working with disabled people rewarding. They like working with customers who appreciate them. Although, unlike surrogates, they are only there to provide sexual relief rather

**'The Disability Rights Commission has yet to pursue a case on behalf of a disabled person who feels they are being denied access to a sexual service under the Disability Discrimination Act'**

more severe the disability, the more difficult accessing sexual experiences can be. For those lucky enough to live near an Outsiders group, sex and social life may be on the agenda, but for many people, having a sex life still remains a struggle.

So what can be done? Whilst greater availability of disability-friendly sex aids would be an improvement, a professional national sexual surrogacy service would be a real asset to many disabled people who would not otherwise be able to have a sexual experience with a partner, or who lack the confidence to do so. Sexual surrogates are trained in psychology and physiology and specialise in helping clients with their sexual self-esteem and, through sexual teaching, address fears and concerns. In many parts of the world, including some US states, Canada, Australia and parts of Scandinavia this is already available. Even in Switzerland, "touchers" are employed to give sexual pleasure, though not intercourse or oral sex, to disabled people.

In this country, we bury our heads in the sand. Few care workers have any training in how to help with a client's sexual needs and think that, by merely discussing them, they could be open to accusations of

than aiding sexual exploration in a wider sense, many would like basic training so they could understand disability better and be confident that they would not, for instance, hurt clients during sex.

The Disability Rights Commission has yet to pursue a case on behalf of a disabled person who feels they are being denied access to a sexual service under the Disability Discrimination Act and I wish someone would be brave enough to ask them for support to do this. But that's the problem really – people are disenfranchised by embarrassment. No one writes to their MP complaining about the lack of help for their sexual problem.

The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has recently announced his decision to comprehensively review the laws on prostitution for the first time in 50 years. This will prove a minefield, as every way of dealing with the "oldest profession" has been tried over the past 700 years. We must be careful that the needs of disabled people are not overlooked in the review. I, for one, shall be writing to ask that the needs of disabled people are considered and to suggest that legislation could reflect this real need in a positive way. If others




Lust-struck: Mat Fraser and Saffron Burrows in BBC2's *Urban Myth*, in which two could-have-been-lovers consider a night of passion

write too, then things may – at last – start to change. Because unless we make a stand, the all too sexless status quo will be maintained.

Jane Gibbin is a BASRT accredited and UKCP registered sexual & relationship psychotherapist & independent consultant specialising in sexuality and disability. She works in the NHS and in independent practice. She can be contacted at [nppcymru@btopenworld.com](mailto:nppcymru@btopenworld.com)

## Links


**Outsiders** have taken up some of SPOD's work, tel: 0707 4993527 [www.outsiders.org.uk](http://www.outsiders.org.uk)  
**www.bentvoices.org** is a useful site for gay and bisexual disabled men  
**www.sexualhealth.com** has a range of all round sexual health information  
**www.disabilitysex.com/sexhelp** is another sexual resource




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# The morning after

Jo Williams has cp and an active sex life. Why should she find it hard to access family planning services?

I turned over in the bed and shivered, trying to ignore his snoring. It was 7am and I'd got bored of him at about 4.30am. He must have sensed my disgust, as he opened his eyes and offered a lazy, "Morning Sarah". I didn't know what annoyed me most: the fact that he didn't remember my name or the fact that I hadn't bothered to correct him after we'd left the club. But names hadn't seemed as important as a shag. At the time.

I smiled at him and called him Dave, knowing full well his name was John. He asked me for a paracetamol. His breath was stale and beery. The fact that he had left his socks on added insult to injury.

He left at 10am, but his smell lingered. I opened the blinds and let the blue sky persuade me it was healthy for a woman of my age to have an active sex life. But my memory did little to convince me that the night before could be described as active. And

anyway, I felt a little ashamed that I would have to go to the family planning centre for the morning after pill again. I finished off last night's booze and cursed my libido, before heading through the door.

The bus stop was heaving with young mothers. Mixed feelings swamped me.

I started thinking what would happen if I was pregnant, but then imagined telling the child that a night on

**'I imagined telling the child that a night on the town was the reason for their conception and that I didn't know their father's surname, and felt myself blush'**

the town was the reason for their conception and that I didn't know their father's surname, and felt myself blush. The old lady – Vera – who lives in sheltered housing asked how I was.

The bus was about her age and I jarred my ankle on the step due to a combination of clumsiness and paranoia at

being watched. This inspired an outpouring of concern from the pensioners behind me. The bus driver gave me a similar look as he pawed my ticket money. I offered my third fake smile of the day and headed for a seat.

Old gents in shirts, ties and Brylcreem offered their seats as old ladies tilted and nodded their heads knowingly. One said, "Isn't she a pretty little thing?" I felt about ten – like a slutty Lolita.

I thanked the men and after a brief struggle, took a seat near the window. The dour smell of age embalmed me as we snailed through Toxteth. The sky was less blue than before, but still seemed cheerful. The man next to me started talking about his granddaughter and how she broke her leg last year. I said all



Jo Williams: "I feel like I'm at the headmistress's office"

the "Ohs" and "Yesses" in the right places and we were soon by the church. This got me thinking about my womb. I held my stomach and craved to be sitting by Sylvia Plath, who would have known what to say.

Finally I'm at the surgery door. I feel like I'm at the headmistress's office. I remind myself I'm a woman and have every right to be here. It is the only sensible thing left to do. As I wade through the errant schoolgirls in their sunbed-baked skins and their long socks, the receptionist looks over and says in a much practised tone, "I suppose you

want an appointment".

"Yes," I reply.

"Well, we have a downstairs room, but we don't get many people like you, so I'll have to ring upstairs to tell them. What do you want to see her about?"

And, with that, my last shred of patience dissolves. I have to bite my tongue to stop me demanding what the point of disabled access is in the first place. And I force myself to smile.

• FPA (formerly the Family Planning Association): [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk), Helpline tel: 0845 310 1334, Mon-Fri 9am - 6pm, fax: 020 7837 3042

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# Dial-up dating

If you've exhausted the traditional avenues of finding Mr or Ms Right, you may want to get online, writes Chris Page

I've been a dedicated Net-Head for years now. I first discovered the web at The Programme Centre, a government employment initiative at my local college. I'd heard about email, weblogs and the like, but this was my chance to really embrace 21st century technology. Having previous computer knowledge, it was easy to take the first steps. I was shown how to set up a free email account – and soon I was in touch with the world.

Before seeking love, I wanted to find a site that dealt with disability information services, and I wanted to talk with other disabled people. That's when I discovered discussion forums on various subjects and sites. These are areas for you to alternately vent your spleen,

It's often a hit-or-miss affair.

If you're not overloaded with self-esteem, then think carefully. Do you want to pay money – these sites aren't free – and risk not getting your money's worth because the people you contact reply with a, "Thanks – but I don't think we're compatible"? These kind of responses can lead you to wonder whether it was your disability that put them off. I know it shouldn't be like that – but it happens.

On balance, I've concluded that it's best (as in job applications) to be honest about your disability. After all, if you're prepared to lie about something so fundamental, a potential suitor might think you're untrustworthy in other aspects of your life. Online romance hasn't happened for me – not

Most of these have plenty of users, but they are often spread around the world. The likelihood of any meaningful relationship developing from an overseas contact is remote – unless you're prepared to take a chance and fly halfway across the world, only to realise that the person you spent hours speaking with online isn't the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. I'm sticking to British websites – it's cheaper if the person you meet isn't what you expect and easier to get together if you do click.

Chatrooms and Instant Messaging are other areas I've explored in an effort to meet people. I don't use chatrooms – mainly because I can't type fast enough to have anything approaching a proper conversation. Blame that on hand/eye coordination! Added to that, you can't really get to know someone on a meaningful level. Instant Messaging, however, is easier, and you can use it to get in touch with friends around the world. I've chatted for hours with friends as close as Stevenage and as far away as Oregon, USA. The only difficulty arises when you have a time difference to consider:

**'I don't care if some people – including my parents – think I'm sad. It's better than being alone'**

talk, empathise and generally chew the fat with others. I found this liberating, and have spent hours on them debating everything from disability rights to the merits of Americanising established British TV sitcoms for our transatlantic cousins.

After a few initial arguments on forums (I was a bit bolshy in the early days) I began to make good friends as I discovered common ground with fellow forum-users. Many of those friendships still stand. I've met up with one of my closer friends and spoken to others by phone. The forums are now a part of my daily life. I don't care if some people – including my parents – think I'm sad. It's better than being alone.

Of course, not everyone you meet on websites is as genuine as you hope they will be. More than once I've seen someone's profile picture – some sites let you compose a personal profile to tell others a little bit about yourself – and recognised the photo as that of a TV star. I've also had trouble with so-called "trolls" – people who use the internet to abuse others for their own amusement. You have to exercise a little caution and not give away too much personal information.

Forums may be great for making friends, but what about love? Is the internet a viable option for disabled people who've tried the usual avenues to find Mr, Miss or Ms Right?

yet, anyway. However, it does work for some. My friend Jane met her husband Robin online – and she didn't mention her disability (they've been married now for four years).

There are only a few dating sites I've come across which are specifically for disabled people.



'Net gain: The web has opened doors to Chris that weren't there before

it's no good speaking to your friend in Australia when they're tucked up in bed.

If it were not for the internet, I would be totally disconnected from the world. I would not have discovered new sources of information, entertainment and, most importantly, friends. So turn on, log in, and see for yourself what new horizons await.

## Love links

[www.youareable.com](http://www.youareable.com)  
– discussion forums  
[www.bbc.co.uk/ouch](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch)  
– discussion forums  
[www.disabledunited.com](http://www.disabledunited.com)  
– dating for disabled people  
[www.avenues.co.uk](http://www.avenues.co.uk)  
[www.simplylove.co.uk](http://www.simplylove.co.uk)  
[www.datingagency.com](http://www.datingagency.com)

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# On the mend

At the age of five, Dave Hayes' mother was told not to expect him to achieve anything because he was "a spastic". Today, he's a trustee of Scope, disability adviser to North Yorkshire Police and he runs his own washing machine repair business

When I left school in 1972, at the age of 16, the disablement employment officer at the job centre sent me to The Spastics Society's assessment centre in London. I had already decided I wanted to be an electrical engineer and was hoping a firm in York would see past my disability and train me. However, the assessment report said I did not understand that my disability would prevent me becoming an electrical engineer. They suggested a career in the Civil Service.

I remember thinking there must be some kind of bench-based repair work I could do – something which did not need physical strength or climbing. A couple of days later, I went back to see my disablement officer and said I would still like to try a training course. I was soon en route to Durham and Finchale College. It was great, not only because I was learning a trade, but also

because it was a residential course, so as I was away from home. There were nights out with friends and girlfriends. I found the course demanding, but I stuck at it and left two years later with a national certificate in electrical engineering.

It was hard to convince potential employers I could do the job. As soon as they saw I had a disability they were not interested and they had plenty of excuses not to employ me. Then I had my first break. An electric motor company called



Spin flyer: Dave in his York workshop and (below) ready to go out on the road with dog Tilly

director. He asked me to come and see him the following day. I said I was so keen that I could see him later the same day.

I was ecstatic when they agreed to give me a two week trial. I had told them I couldn't do any heavy lifting, but it was mostly bench work anyway, and they said the other

**'When I picked up my first vehicle with my name on the side of it, I realised I had really overcome the odds. I felt I had made it'**

Electric Rewind Services had a vacancy for a fitter to take electric motors apart, fit new bearings and test the motors. Within an hour of seeing the ad, I had rung the company and spoken to the managing

engineers could help moving the motors.

I stayed with the company for four years, until I decided I would like to get out more and work on domestic appliances. A vacancy came up as a workshop



engineer with Herbert Todd's, a large private company, and I got the job. I left Electric Rewind Services, but will never forget them for giving me the chance to work and learn.

The new job took me out to building sites, maintaining generators, power tools and temporary lighting rigs. I also repaired vacuum cleaners, kettles, washing machines and tumble dryers.

After Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, she heavily promoted small businesses and the rewards of private ownership. In August 1981, I finally decided to start my own business. Herbert Todd's even gave me a repair contract rather than replacing me in my old job. When I picked up my first vehicle with my name on the side of it, I realised I had really overcome the odds. I felt I had made it.

The business went well. I was turning over £29,000 a year, with a net profit of £14,000. This was a good profit for the Eighties. Most of the work was with washing machines and dishwashers, but I also rewired houses and was regularly under floors and in lofts. At its peak, I had four employees and a shop selling reconditioned goods.

Unfortunately, in 1989, I had to sell the business. I was in increased pain, and was told that I needed a replacement

hip. The operation and recovery meant I would have to be off work for several months. My consultant suggested I consider teaching. I took his advice and, because my son Phillip was only eight, I sold the business and went to work for North Yorkshire probation service, teaching young offenders electrical servicing. It was rewarding work, but I missed the buzz of running my own business.

It soon became obvious that Phillip had inherited my practical skills, and so, two years ago, I set up a new business. Minster Washing Machines – which I run with my wife, Judith, as well as my son – now has more than 550 clients, with new customers coming in every week. The prospects look good for Phillip, as he will never be stuck for work in the future and he can also do some of the jobs I used to find difficult.

The moral of this story is not to be put off and give it a go, because the rewards for success can be immense.

Although my early experience with The Spastics Society (now Scope) assessment centre was negative, it is clear how much it has changed in the last 30 years. I believe Scope's diversity initiative will lead to more disabled persons in work, both employed and self employed.

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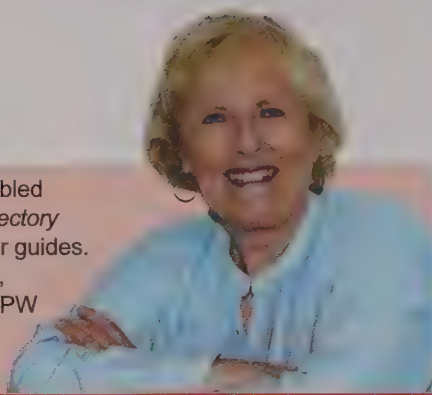


ILLUSTRATION BY CLARE CURTIS

# Dear Ann

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Ann Darnbrough, who is disabled herself, is co-author of the *Directory for Disabled People* and other guides. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)



## No applause at CD:UK

I am 24, have cp and feel that I've been discriminated against severely by Applause Store, a TV audience ticket company. The discrimination happened at Riverside Studios in Hammersmith where I went to watch the filming of *CD:UK* because my friend had a spare ticket.

I went into the totally accessible studio and found my friend straight away. But then after ten minutes, an Applause Store representative came up to us and asked my friend why she'd failed to let them know about "the wheelchair". The way he dismissed the fact that I'm not a piece of brainless machinery riled me. I moved to the back of the studio and had to bite my tongue.

On another occasion, when I tried to book a ticket, they passed me from pillar to post until I was finally told that *CD:UK* don't accommodate wheelchairs.

*Helen, via email*

This seems to me to be a very clear example of discrimination. You should contact the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and see what they advise.

• *DRC helpline: tel: 08457 622 633, textphone: 08457 622 644, email: [enquiry@drc-gb.org](mailto:enquiry@drc-gb.org), post: DRC Helpline, Freepost, Mid 02164, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9BR*

## I want to work again

I've been unemployed for two-and-a-half years.

I was a welder for most of my working life, but can't do physical work any more because of back and leg problems.

I have been at college for two years learning computer skills, where I picked up two qualifications. I am currently learning word processing and improving my typing skills and speed.

I would like to get employment in the computing field, but being 56, semi-

disabled and with no experience of office work, most employers are reluctant to employ me.

*Tom, by email*

First of all, congratulations for going to college and acquiring such important computer skills. For the time being, it might be best to consider offering your services by working from home. You could place an advertisement in your local paper. I am sure you could design an eye-catching ad.

You might also try offering your services to chosen organisations – including those who employed you before as a welder. It would be worth finding out the Managing Director's or Human Resources Manager's name and to address them personally. And to develop your CV, you could ask someone at your college for a reference.

Another suggestion is to offer your services free to local voluntary organisations. Some of these have difficulty

## Housing needs ignored

Our daughter is six years old and is severely disabled with cp. About three years ago, we went on the council housing list, but we are still waiting for a property that would suit our daughter's needs. It seems as if the council has put our case on the back-burner.

Jessica has no skills at all. We have to feed and toilet her and carry or push her around. As well as a home, we need certain equipment set up in her bathroom. What can we do to speed up the process?

*Michael, by email*

I'm sorry to hear about the problems you are having getting appropriate housing and equipment for your daughter and yourselves. For equipment, I suggest you contact the Disabled Living Foundation. If you live anywhere near London, it would be worth paying them a visit. You will need to book a time so that you can get the guidance you need.

Regarding your housing problem, I suggest you contact your MP. They can sometimes make miracles happen. They will attract more attention to your cause and may even be able to get you off the back-burner. You might also phone Scope's Cerebral Palsy Helpline for advice.

• *Disabled Living Foundation, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU. Helpline: 0870 603 9177*

• *Cerebral Palsy Helpline: 0800 800 3333*

managing their business affairs. This would be a way of acquiring the experience you currently don't have. You could always seek paid employment later when you'll be able to list the experience you've gained.

## No need to be lonely

I can never understand why people are lonely and can't make friends. I'm disabled, I can't get out to social occasions and what's more, I am plain, old, wear glasses and am not the kind to attract men.

Nevertheless, even though marriage and children don't interest me (they involve too much cooking, cleaning and responsibility), I have had two

long-term boyfriends. The first boyfriend was lost as a pilot in WW2 and I have done much research on what happened to him in the records at the Public Records Office. I now investigate the stories of other people who have served in the RAF. With the aid of a computer, I now have more than enough to do and I have lots of friends.

*Eunice, London*

I enjoyed reading about your wonderfully positive view of life. When people write to me and say how lonely they are, I always suggest they take up hobbies and so get to meet people one way or another with similar interests.

I learnt long ago that it is personality and a lively outlook on life that matters – any glamour fades very soon, but vitality shines through and lights up the face of an interesting person. Given those attributes, disability counts for very little.

Help at the end of the phone



DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.

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# Camera ready



New advances in digital technology have made photography cheaper and more accessible than ever. But it remains a rewarding pastime, writes office administrator Victoria Lucas

I first became interested in photography while I was at college. I was doing a course in media studies and was able to take a couple of photography classes. I loved them. I loved holding the camera to my face and seeing the world through a lens. I loved seeing the photographs and knowing that these images, these captured moments in time, were captured by me. While writing is my way of taking what I think and putting it on paper, photography is my way of taking what I see, bringing it through the lens and on to a photograph. It makes me feel creative and I find that immensely satisfying.

I've been interested in photography for several years, but only now do I feel ready to take it up seriously as a hobby. Because my disability is rare (I have Cherubism, a genetic disorder which causes growth of the lower face), I don't know how it may affect my vision in the future and I feel a pressure to take as many images of the world as I can now, while I still have the chance.

I have an old second hand single lens reflex (SLR) camera that I bought when I was 18. Because I'm visually impaired, I'm finding it increasingly difficult to focus my vision through my camera's small viewfinder. After playing around with a friend's digital camera recently, I found it was much more accessible for me. With digital cameras, you can view the image on a small screen before and after you've taken the photograph, and this is much easier for my eyesight.

I'm currently saving up to buy a digital camera of my own. I've given up chocolate bars as my New Year's resolution, and considering the small fortune that I would normally spend on them, it shouldn't take me too long to save up.

If you're interested in buying a camera yourself, your first stop should be the internet. It's a good way of comparing prices and some shops sell their cameras at a cheaper web exclusive price. If you're not sure what to buy, get some photography and computer

magazines (which have features on digital photography) from a newsagent's. They often do tests to compare different cameras and they're good at explaining how the cameras work, without using too much jargon.

If you're interested in learning about the technical aspects of photography, see if your local college has any courses. If you're on benefits, you may be able to get a reduced fee. If you'd rather teach yourself, have a look at photography books in your local library.

If you're interested in printing your own black and



a darkroom by shutting out the light from the window and doing the printing at night. But one morning, my mum came in to run her bath, only

**'I loved seeing the photographs and knowing that these images, these captured moments in time, were captured by me'**

white photos, a simple darkroom is pretty easy to set up at home. You can find cheap darkroom equipment in second-hand photography shops or advertised in your local newspaper. As a teenager, I turned my old bathroom into

to find dozens of photographs dangling precariously on rows of string over the bathtub. I hadn't washed the prints as thoroughly as I should have, and little yellow drips of fixer liquid had stained the pink enamel during the

VICTORIA LUCAS



Snap happy: Victoria's photo of disabled singer Minika Green, taken for *Disability Arts in London (DAIL)* magazine.

night. My use of the bathroom darkroom came to an abrupt end.

If your disability means you can't keep a camera steady, place it on a tripod and attach a shutter cable, leading from the camera to your hand, so you can take the picture without worrying about camera shake. If you can't physically control the camera yourself, you could get a friend or assistant to do it. The disabled photographer Alison Lapper, who famously

photographed herself posing as the Venus De Milo, uses an assistant to take the photographs for her, but she directs the image and has full creative ownership.

I think everyone has the ability to be creative. I'm not a particularly talented photographer, but I don't think that matters. A hobby is something that gives you pleasure, and whether it is something you are good at or not isn't as important as how it makes you feel.

## GET AROUND



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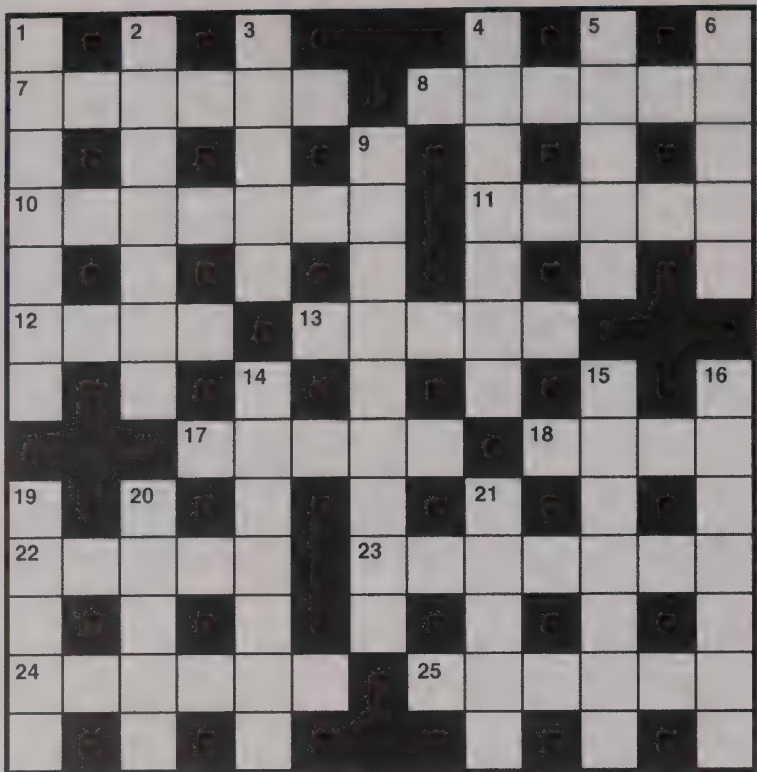
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[www.justmobility.co.uk/roadshow](http://www.justmobility.co.uk/roadshow)





CROSSWORD BY JIM MCLAREN • ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE TROUNCE  
ANSWERS ON PAGE 39

## ACROSS

7. Ted Danson, Kelsey Grammer and Woody Harrelson starred in this US sitcom (6)
8. **And 11 Across.** Director of Disability Awareness in Action (6,5)
10. Person with a javelin (7)
11. See 8 Across
12. **And 24 Across.** He recently received a lifetime award in the Charity Champions Awards (4,6)
13. George Bush's House (5)
17. Disabled campaigners were unhappy with his speech at the end of the European Year of Disabled People (5)
18. Kudrow, who plays Phoebe in *Friends* (4)
22. Small firework that hisses before exploding (5)
23. Reykjavik is this country's capital (7)
24. See 12 Across
25. In October this city held its first disability arts festival (6)

## DOWN

1. Fireside container for coal (7)
2. They carry coffins (7)
3. Chancellor of the Exchequer (5)
4. Broad, heavy knife for cutting (7)
5. Prickle on a plant (5)
6. Buenos Aires and Montevideo stand on this river (5)
9. Painful inflammation of the joints (9)
14. Whale fat (7)
15. Harry Potter and Ron Weasley are training to be these (7)
16. Small fish, often preserved in tightly packed tins (7)
19. Short, literary composition (5)
20. Raw fish served in Japanese restaurants (5)
21. Snake poison (5)

## Candid Kate

Come on baby,  
light my fire...



**H**i, and welcome to my world and another column about my life. It's the fine month of February, the month of romantic dinners for two, meeting lips, covering the one you love with your own very special mix of gifts which will make your precious moments sweeter; having saucy moments together and the energetic action which goes on while creating another.

Some of you might need help and facilitation when the heat rises and you are dealing with some hot stuff, but how on earth do you tell your social worker you need help in this most enjoyable activity? Don't worry, I am sure that she cooks pancakes too.

Cooking – the most natural activity in the world! Well, maybe not the most natural. There is another natural activity which I won't talk about. After all, I am a disabled person and everyone knows we don't do such things.

I'll leave that to the birds and the bees – not together hopefully. We would then have to ask Tom Shakespeare if the result is to be a bee or not to be a bee!

Whilst we are talking to Dr Tom, we might well discuss the effectiveness of placing one's kidney under the electric hammer to improve the walking ability of one's little daughter with cp. What is the bloody man thinking of? I taught myself to walk when the physiotherapists stopped doing stupid things to my legs, but now choose to use a wheelchair most of the time as walking is so exhausting.

Closer to home, my friend's 12-year-old kid brother was told he was too hot to handle. In this instance, the pre-adolescent wasn't best pleased to be called a bomb of fire. If it was a well cool babe of 15 who called our fireball hot, he would be really excited. But it wasn't some teenage queen of the playground; it was an old grumpy theatre caretaker who wouldn't allow him to take part in the kids chorus in a pantomime as, being a wheelchair user, he was a fire risk. When I go to see the pantomime, I'm going to wheel in brandishing a giant box of matches, with my communication aid programmed to sing, "I am the Queen of Hell Fire, and I give you FIRE!"

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## What's on

**Deaf Day 2004** will be held on 7 February. The City Lit Centre for Deaf People will be hosting a day of events and workshops in London, covering education, leisure, employment and training. There will be representatives from a range of organisations, and interpreters, communicators and lipspeakers will be available all day. Free. Westminster Central Hall, Storey's Gate. Tel: 020 7383 7624. Minicom:

020 7380 0416. Email: deafday@citylit.ac.uk

It is **International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Day** on 21 February, ahead of RSI Awareness Week. RSI London and the Musicians Union will be running an information and advice day on 21 February at the Musicians Union, London. Tel: 020 7266 2000. www.rsi.org.uk

**Mencap's 2004 Snap!** photo competition is underway.

The competition, which is open to people both with and without learning disabilities, includes categories such as Hard at Work and Slice of Life. The winning entries will go on display at London's Victoria & Albert Museum during Learning Disability Week in June. Photographer David Bailey will be among the judges. Closing date: 1 March. Tel: 020 7696 5603. www.mencap.org.uk/snap

## Courses

**Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD)** is holding a one-day training course called Organising Accessible Meetings and Events. The course will advise on access and information needs, as well as highlight legal issues and available resources. 5 February. From £67. Conference Centre, 336 Brixton Road, London.

Tel: 020 7346 5800. Website www.glad.org.uk. Email J.Nixon@glad.org.uk

The **Disabled Living Centres Council (DLCC)**, the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) have joined forces for a practical training day titled Are

You Sleeping Safely? The event is aimed at giving professionals a greater understanding of bed safety equipment, in accordance with new government guidelines. From £75. At various venues around the UK until April. Eastbourne, 17 February; Bristol, 26 February. DLCC, tel: 0161 834 1044. Website: www.dlcc.org.uk

## Publications

The **Dyslexia Kid Project** has produced a multicultural film on dyslexia. Written by Maxine Chantel-Igbinedion, it features contributions from educational psychologists and pupils from East Court School in London. The film aims to raise awareness among parents, schools and organisations of dyslexia in the black and ethnic community. Tel: 020 8985 9443, or email: maxineigbinedion@yahoo.co.uk

## Bursary scheme

The **Leach Trust** has established a bursary scheme to enable three disabled graduates to study for a one-year postgraduate course in broadcast production, broadcast journalism or print journalism. The maximum grant available is £5,000. You must already have won a place on a one-year or fast-track PTC/ NCTJ or BJTC accredited postgraduate course in broadcast production, print or broadcast journalism that began in autumn 2003 or begins in January or February 2004. Closing date: 19 July. For an application form contact the Leach Trust, Lightleap, 38 Stonehill Road, East Sheen, SW14 8RW, tel: 020 8878 1626 or email mweston@glyndon.demon.co.uk

Due to lack of funding, **DN** regrets that the Freedom in Focus photography competition will not be taking place in 2004. Watch this space for details of the 2005 competition.

Pass this copy on and introduce a friend to **DN**

## DN'S EMAIL HAS BEEN DOWN

Due to technical difficulties we were unable to receive emails (to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk) over Christmas and New Year, so if you emailed us at this time, please send it again. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS**

DOWN:

1. Scuttle 2. Bearers 3. Brown 4. Machete 5. Thorn 6. Plate 7. Cheers 8. Rachel 10. Thrower 11. Hurst 12. Lord 13. White 17. Blair 18. Lisa 22. Squib 23. Iceland 24. Ashley 25. London 21. Venom

# E a s y k i t

## Lucy Andrews answers your questions

I have MS and find it difficult now to stand for any length of time and keep my balance. Cooking for my family is a particular problem as I am unable to reach the things I need and move them around safely.



The first thing to do is to minimise and organise! We tend to accumulate gadgets over the years. Get rid of the things you don't use to make better use of the space you have.

Sitting down will give you better balance while you are preparing meals. You could try a perching stool. An angled seat will put you in a better position for reaching than a stool with a horizontal seat. Then see how far round you can reach. You want to place everything you use regularly within this area.

Use the space above your work surface by fixing a shelf for storage jars, tea, coffee and so on. For a more modern look, you could use a metal rail system that can have hooks, racks and shelves attached. They are available from many DIY stores.

Cupboards can be fitted with pull-out inserts and baskets so you don't have to reach to the back of them. Try Woodfit Ltd, tel: 01257 266421, www.woodfit.com. Angled shelving for stacking tinned foods will make viewing and access easier, like

the safe can stacker, £9.99, above, from Betterware, tel: 0845 121 1010, www.betterware.co.uk

Some specialist kitchen companies supply pull down shelving or high cupboards on runners that adjust vertically, which you lower to reach into. Softley Ltd, tel: 01604 626468, www.softleykitchens.co.uk; Design Matters KBB Ltd, tel: (01628) 531584, www.dmkbb.co.uk

A pick-up stick (also known as a helping hand) can sometimes work for reaching lighter objects. If your wrists are weak, use one that has a forearm support. Helping Hand Co (Ledbury) Ltd, tel: (01531) 635678, www.helpinghand.co.uk For further advice, look at the Disabled Living Foundation's (DLF) fact sheet Choosing Household Equipment on our web site www.dlf.org.uk; or phone the helpline on 0845 130 9177. A local Disabled Living Centre can also offer help, see www.dlcc.org.uk Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the DLF.

## Websites

The **E-access** bulletin provides news, information and advice on technology issues for people with vision impairment. The bulletin can be found at www.headstar.com/eab. Sponsored by the RNIB (www.rnib.org.uk), the site is fully accessible.

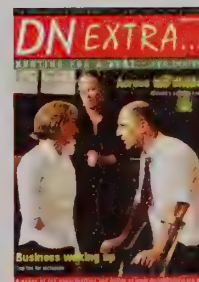
# DN disabilitynow

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Please return this form to Disability Now Subscriptions, FREEPOST NATE1512, Somerset, TA11 6ZA.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We enclose a cheque or postal order for £ \_\_\_\_\_ (Payable to Disability Now)

I authorise you to charge my Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Switch ☐

Card No:           Iss No: (Switch only) \_\_\_\_\_ Valid from: / /  Expiry date: / /

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ **DN02/04**

Those on means-tested benefits	FREE (see details above) <input type="checkbox"/> (photocopied proof required)
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Professional/Organisation	1 year £23 <input type="checkbox"/>
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Fully adapted  
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New body & interior styling with alloy wheels, curtain air bags, front and rear parking sensors as standard.

Accommodates wheelchair & user + 5 passengers inc. driver  
Available with manual or automatic transmission.

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from

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New body and interior styling on all models.  
59" of clear head room for wheelchair user

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**0191 2260099**



# DN LINAGE

Tel: 020 7619 7320, Fax: 020 7619 7331, Minicom: 020 7619 7332, E-mail: patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk

## • Personal

**JAMES (25). SOUTH WEST.** I have an acquired brain injury. My interests include electronic music, football and computers. Good sense of humour. Would like to make new friends. Box no: 263

**MY NAME IS** Michael. I am a Christian astrologer (not professional). I have a rare type of dyslexia. Interests are history, old time dancing, piano, newspaper cuttings and steam engines. I am a young looking 53 and wlm a lady, perhaps younger. I am 6 ft and slim. I live near Bishop's Stortford. Box no: 264

**MARY 49 YEARS** old, few medical problems, car owner, can travel, divorced, adult kids. Likes coast, boats and swimming. Seeks new friends. Box no: 265

**FINANCIAL ADVISOR, 40**, with CP, own house and car, respectfully seeks a sexy, fun-loving lady for genuine relationship and high life. Photograph would be appreciated. Box no: 266

**FUNLOVING, EASYGOING 34YR** old male, mild CP, own house/car. Seeks bubbly, independent female to share love, life and movies. Box no: 267

## • Cars/vans/caravans

**CHAIRMAN FORD FIESTA 1.3**, red, pas, 1998 R Reg, 23k miles. Only one owner, MOT expires Aug 04. Carries wheelchair, wheelchair passenger and 2 people in front (incl driver). Ramp, inertia belt, installed seat belt for the wheelchair. £4,400 ono. Tel: 01536 742799.

**CHAIRMAN MERCEDES VITO 2.1**, diesel, orchid green, 02 reg, still under warranty until April 2005, 12k miles, central locking, tinted windows, pas. Lowering suspension with ramp and lowered floor. Seats 5 including wheelchair passenger. Only one owner, £15,750 ono. Tel: 01905 426648 (Worcester).

**CHAIRMAN FORD ESCORT 1.4** white (car derived van) Gowrings conversion. Very good condition, hardly been used, S reg, 1998 model, 23,200 miles. MOT expires August 04, two seater plus wheelchair with electric winch. £7,000 ono. Tel: 07884 198160 (Woking, Surrey area).

**CHAIRMAN FIAT FIORINO 1.4** Petrol, 1996, MOT expires June 04, Dark Blue, Under 28K miles, good condition. Ramp, inertia belts & seatbelt for wheelchair. Driver, Front Passenger, and rear Passenger Seats plus Wheelchair Passenger. £3,800 ono. Tel: 020 8776 9038.

**RENAULT TRAFIC T1100**, K reg, Versa conversion, seats 4 plus wheelchair. Good condition, MOT November. £2,500. Tel: 01530 271415 (Leicestershire).

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER 1.9TD**, W reg, Widnes conversion, 4/5 plus wheelchair. Rear access, manual, ramp, winch assist, MOT May 04. Dealer serviced, 1 owner, ex demonstration, green, excellent condition. Sale due to bereavement, £8,800. Tel: 01823 350765 or mobile: 0771 8596097.

**VOLKSWAGEN SHARAN S1.9TDI**, registered Sept 2001, only one owner, 20k miles, pas. Automotive Group conversion with ramp. Carries 5 plus wheelchair. E/windows, 6 speed gearbox, white. Cost £20,000, £14,900 ono. Tel: 01993 771184 or 07881 820415.

**CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO 1.2**, silver grey with ramp. 2.5k miles, immaculate condition. Cost £12,000 new a year ago, £10,000 ono. Tel: 0191 522 7773.

## • Wheelchairs/scooters

**INVACARE SPECTRA PLUS** powered wheelchair. Head restraint and joystick control. Only 18 months' old, £1,900 ono. Tel: 01536 742799.

**JAZZY 1120 POWERCHAIR**, electric and left handed, battery driven, up to 20 miles max range, max speed 4 1/2 mph. 2 years old, blue, rear bag. In excellent condition, £1,000 ono. Tel: 01664 850256.

**ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR INVACARE** Storm 3, brand new August 2002, hardly used, blue fabric, seat width - 20", depth - 46". Attendant control assist headrest, elevating leg rest and angle plates (£7,000 new) sale - £5,000 ono. Tel: 07884 198160 (Woking).

**EVTEC EVOLUTION RANGE**, hardly used, 4 wheels, tyre size 260 mm. lights, horn, reverse hazard warning, rear view mirror, basket, all switches waterproof. Seat rotates for easy access, metallic red with cream seat and backrest, 2 black armrests. 25 miles on full charge, complete with battery charger, blue passenger protective cape. Insured until September 04, with user's manual. Bought new for £3,295, for sale at £2,400 ono. Tel: 01953 889484.

**ENIGMA ENERGY POWERCHAIR** with transferable controls, folds up for car boot. With kerb climber and instruction manual. Never been used, cost £3,200, asking £1,900 ono. Tel: 020 8393 7637.

## • Household/family

**2 STAIRLIFTS. BOTH** standard flight 13 risers. Stannah 230 left hand 1997 swivel chair. Meditec left hand, InfrR remote, swivel chair. Both with backup + safety features + professional refurbished, £700 each. Prices include fitting. Tel: 01483 728680 (Surrey).

**DEEP CELL PRIME** mattress by Talley as used in hospitals, guaranteed until Sept 2004. As new cost £2,200, accept £600 ono. Tel: 01895 638611.

**COMPLETE MOBILITY ARMCHAIR**, lift, recline, massage and treatment chair. Together with full instructions and warranty, 3 months' old. In excellent condition, cost £2,495. £1,495 ono. Tel: 01732 884980 (Kent).

**SHOPRIDER SOVEREIGN SCOOTER**, with charger, max range 20 miles. A couple of months' old. Cost £1,639, must sell, £800 ono. Tel: 020 8788 3220.

**NEPTUNE BATH LIFT**, never been used. With full instructions, cost £795, asking £450 ono. Tel: 01628 620246.

**BATH TUB WITH** integrated electric lift which lowers and raises user. Offers. Tel: 020 8922 6651.

## • Wanted

**HAND CONTROLS REQUIRED** to operate indicators, wipers and lights. Lodgsons preferred. Tel: 01253 692780.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE**, any make or model. Call with details. Will travel. Tel: 01924 400597 or mobile: 07870 385822.

## • Bicycles/Tricycles

**WRK FOUR WHEEL** bike for teenager, blue and red. Excellent condition, £350 ono. Tel: 01865 875902 (Oxford).

## • Combined

**VW CARAVELLE P** reg, 1.9 Auto 8 seats, 31k miles. Air con, rear wheelchair ramp and locks, e/windows, pas, fsh, immobiliser, stereo £7,500. Jazzy 1120 wheelchair, 6 months old, 2 seats (1 reclining), foot rests £1,200. Lift-through the floor, Pollock, standard floor/ceiling height, barely used £6,500. Shower toilet, Somoa Closomat. Water jet, warm air. Hardly used. Elbow and foot pedal operation. £1,500. Stairlift 1. Stannah 230, R/H Swivel, Rail 3950. £700. (installed, subject to location). Stairlift 2. Meditec 120, R/H swivel, Rail 4150. £700 (installed, subject to location). Tel Hilary or Toby Jenkins: 01483 728 680 (Woking). Email: hilaryj@bntinternet.com

## • Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

### Muscular Dystrophy Campaign



### We need two communications professionals...

£22,900 - £25,692 (inc London weighting). Clapham, London

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is a dynamic charity providing information and support for people with muscle wasting conditions and funding research into possible treatments and cures. Join our growing Corporate Affairs team to help make a real difference.

### Web/Publications Officer (ref CA/1/WPO)

Providing top quality, up to date information to a variety of audiences is one of our key tasks. We are looking for a multi-talented person to manage our website and publications. As Web and Publications Officer you will have responsibility for developing and implementing our website and publications strategy. You will need experience of producing and editing a wide range of information materials; knowledge of web and print production; be an excellent communicator; and be able to work with and inspire others.

### Press Officer (one year contract) (Ref CA/2/PRO)

From the latest genetics research, via campaigning for a better wheelchair service, to charity supporters running the marathon, our press officer will need to be able to handle a huge variety of stories and get media coverage for all aspects of the work of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. We are looking for someone who can demonstrate their PR experience, has great writing and communication skills and through their knowledge of the media, is ready to raise awareness of muscular dystrophy and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

For an application pack contact Cheryl Begley at cherylbg@muscular-dystrophy.org, fax 020 7493 0670 or write to Muscular Dystrophy Campaign 7-11 Prescott Place London SW4 6BS. **Closing date 12/2/04**

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is an equal opportunities employer. Registered as a charity 205395



Promoting Equal Rights For Disabled People

## DISABILITY WEST MIDLANDS

### Disability Network Strategic Officer (West Midlands) Part Time - 30 hours

Moving the agenda of Disabled people from the margins of society in the West Midlands to the mainstream.

**A Strategic Officer is required to facilitate the participation and influence of the region's Disabled community through the future development of a West Midlands Disability Network. Highly motivated individual with a track record in strategic engagement, innovation in networking and an inclusive approach.**

**Disability West Midlands is the lead organisation in this exciting project, funded by Regional Action West Midlands. It is essential that the post holder has personal experience of disability. Working arrangements may be negotiable. Funded until 31st March 2006.**

Salary: £24,391 pro rata - 30 hours a week

**For details please contact our office on:- Tel 0121 414 1616 Textphone 0121 414 1188**

Closing date 6th February 2004

**DWM is an Equal Opportunities Employer**

## Classified lineage advertisements

Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement (not Personal adverts). Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.

## Lineage styles

**EXAMPLE OF** standard lineage advert. Cost: £7 per line. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF** semi-display lineage advert. Cost: £7 per line plus £10. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF** box lineage advert. Cost: £7 per line plus £20. Tick box below.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

- ☐ Standard lineage advert  
☐ Semi-display lineage advert  
☐ Box lineage advert

**Choose an advert style from far right.** Send this coupon with your name, address, daytime telephone number and a cheque for the total made payable to **Disability Now** to: 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

DN reserves the right to edit advertisements if necessary. Completion of this form does not guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. **Sorry no refunds.** DN is a non-profit making newspaper.



**PERSONAL ADS**

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £20 payable to *Disability Now* with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.

**SEND US YOUR SMALLS...**

...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £7 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

**DEADLINES****DN Extra**

February 2004

published 7

February. Classified

deadlines: Booking

&amp; Copy: 28

January.

**Disability Now**

March 2004

published 21

February classified

deadlines: Booking:

6 February. Copy:

10 February.

• Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

# Ofcom

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Ofcom is the new communications regulator with wide-ranging responsibilities across the UK's communications markets. It now wishes to appoint candidates to advisory posts on older and disabled people. This is an opportunity for individuals across the UK to make a dynamic contribution to an important industry.

Further details about Ofcom's specific areas of responsibility can be found at [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk).

**Advisory Committee on Older & Disabled People**

The Communications Act 2003 requires Ofcom to set up an Advisory Committee (AC) on older and disabled people. Its role will be to inform Ofcom about the interests of older and disabled people in relation to communications matters. This includes broadcasting, access to telecommunications and broadcasting services, communication technologies and employment and training. It will also provide guidance on issues of interest to older and disabled people in relation to consultation and research.

The AC will meet quarterly and all members will require a time commitment of approximately 8 days per year for which they will receive a modest remuneration. The AC will consist of an independent Chair and around 10 members.

**Chair**

The Chair will be responsible for ensuring the smooth running of meetings and regular communication between Ofcom and the AC. The Chair will have the following attributes:

- A credible senior figure with proven experience of effectively chairing committees.
- An understanding and interest in communications.
- Be able to operate at all levels within Ofcom and externally.
- Awareness of issues affecting older and disabled people.

Ofcom is an equal opportunities employer. It wishes to reflect the diversity of contemporary UK society and is therefore actively seeking to recruit colleagues from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as those who have a disability.

To apply for any of these positions, please request an information pack (which contains full details on the application procedure) by e-mail or telephone as shown below. Closing date for applications is Monday 2nd February 2004.

**Members**

Members will be expected to contribute in advising Ofcom. They will have a broad understanding of the issues around communications for older and disabled people. The AC will include at least one member from each of the following stakeholder communities:

- Blind and visually impaired people.
- Deaf and hard of hearing people.
- People with physical impairments.
- People with learning or mental health disabilities.
- Older people.

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**Support for disabled people**

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser, based in your local Jobcentre Plus office and Jobcentre.

They can provide:

- help with finding and keeping a job
- information on training
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice on employing people with disabilities.

**JobCentre**

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

Contact your local Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre for further information.

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

**HOW TO REPLY**

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope *Private and Confidential*. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to *DN*, address on page 2.



# Remploy

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - FINANCE

COVENTRY

SIX FIGURE PACKAGE

**CAN YOU FINE TUNE AND RUN THE FUNCTION, AND BUILD CONFIDENCE AND TRUST AT BOARD LEVEL FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS/INVESTMENTS?**

REMPLOY is the UK's leading provider of employment opportunities for disabled people.

### THE CHALLENGE

- Ensure optimal use of technical mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of control, reporting and management decisions
- Upgrade the calibre and quality of the function
- Enhance management understanding and use of financial frameworks
- Provide the Board and key stakeholders with the confidence and trust to back strategic developments/ investments

### THE PERSON

- Minimum 5 years working at, or just below, Board in a significant devolved organisation/ conglomerate
- A track record of achievement in developing the effectiveness of a finance function
- Currently FD, FC, or Division FD with previous FC in a £200m+ organisation with several divisions/SBUs
- Commercial, enthusiastic, energetic and able to enthuse and reassure others

Working through 81 sites and various programmes, Remploy currently supports 13,200 people and seeks to grow its impact to cover more.

saxonbury

Interested? Email your CV, compensation details and a letter explaining why you qualify to [remployfd@saxonbury.com](mailto:remployfd@saxonbury.com)

Saxonbury Search Ltd, 1a Waterhouse Lane, Kingswood, Surrey KT20 6EB Fax 0870 130 4111 Closing date for applications: Thursday 5 February 2004

# Remploy

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - HUMAN RESOURCES

COVENTRY, with UK travel

SIX FIGURE PACKAGE

**CAN YOU BRING ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT TRANSITION IN HR & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT?**

REMPLOY is the UK's leading provider of employment opportunities for disabled people.

### THE CHALLENGE

- Transition HR to provide "specialist", "generalist", and shared service transactional support to line managers
- Develop/source people and management development programmes to meet capability gaps
- Act as "business partner" to the Board, the line and all other groups to ensure "people capability" required in Remploy to realise the mission
- Act as "custodian" in achieving sustainable, productive relationships with Trade Unions and other stakeholders

### THE PERSON

- A significant period operating at Board/Division Board in a devolved organisation
- A track record of achievement in organisational and people development
- Able to demonstrate success in shifting HR to be owned and embedded in "the line"
- Combines generalist and specialist HR experience, with a capability in enthusing a broad range of constituents

Working through 81 sites and various programmes, Remploy currently supports 13,200 people and seeks to grow its impact to cover more.

saxonbury

Interested? Email your CV, compensation details and a letter explaining why you qualify to [remployhr@saxonbury.com](mailto:remployhr@saxonbury.com)

Saxonbury Search Ltd, 1a Waterhouse Lane, Kingswood, Surrey KT20 6EB Fax 0870 130 4111 Closing date for applications: Thursday 5 February 2004

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51 Renault Kangoo automatics low floors	£12,495
X VW Caravelle diesels. Ramps/winches	£12,495
52 Renault Kangoo low floors / ramps	£12,495
Y VW Caravelle wheelchair driver	£19,995
W Fiat Ulysse lowered rear floor / ramp	£11,995
R Nissan Vannette diesel. Lift / 4 seats	£7,995

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2000 W VW LWB, Side lift, 32,000 miles	£12,750
2000 V Sharan Automotive TDi, 2 owners, 11,000 miles, A/C	£13,995
1999 V Peugeot Expert TD Hill Grau, 5+ chair A/C	£12,500
1999 V Escort Chairman diesel, 44,000 miles, PAS, 1 owner	£8,750
1999 T Suzuki Wagon R, Auto, 1 owner, 30,000 miles	£7,495
1998 S VW TD, with Tail lift, 42,000 miles	£8,750
1998 R VW 2.4D, Auto + Ramp. CRUISER, 46,000 miles	£8,495
1998 R Ford Courier Auto, P.A.S. Universal, 2 owners, 11,000 miles	£6,495
1998 R Mercedes Sprinters, with tail lifts, low mileage diesels	from £12,995
1997 R Toyota Hiace Petrol, 1 owner, 53,000 miles, lift	£8,250
1997 P Fiat Fiorino 1.4 Chairman, 16,000 miles	£4,495
1996 P VW Caravelle Chairman, Auto, 73,000 miles	£9,500
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1995 N Brotherwood Galaxy Auto GLX, 1 owner, 55,000 miles	£10,495
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Tel: 01491 680103.

### Accessible Vehicle Register

We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.

**01202 814112**

[adamprice.avr@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:adamprice.avr@tiscali.co.uk)

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High Quality Fair prices  
Information Phone 01993 842885

• TV Documentary

**BBC**

### MY FAMILY

BBC2 is making a series about just how diverse family life can be.

We'd be interested in hearing from families with experience of living with disability.

Please contact Nina on:  
Tel: 020 8752 4975  
Email: [nina.pidcock@bbc.co.uk](mailto:nina.pidcock@bbc.co.uk)

**DISCLAIMER - DN is not responsible for claims made in the adverts it prints. Readers are advised to check claims with advertisers before relying on them.**



## CONDITIONS

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.

Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews (tel: 020 7619 7320), fax: 020 7619 7331.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.

## • Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

### NEW ENTRANT TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

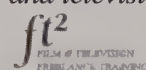
FT2's highly acclaimed new entrant scheme is, subject to funding, looking to recruit people determined to establish freelance careers in one of the following junior technical and production grades of the film and television industry:

Assistant Editor	Makeup/Hair Assistant
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Grip	Wardrobe Assistant
Production Assistant ( <i>continuity, co-ordinator &amp; assistant location manager</i> )	

Applicants must be 18+, demonstrate a genuine interest and knowledge of the industry and a practical understanding of the assistant's job, probably gained through work experience or working as a runner. This is a two year, full time, paid training scheme.

Application packs can be downloaded from our website on [www.ft2.org.uk/recruit](http://www.ft2.org.uk/recruit). Please print off, complete and return by mail. Alternatively send an A4 s.a.e. to the address below clearly marked for one of the above trainee positions. The closing date for receipt of completed application forms is 1 April.

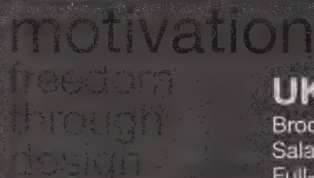
*FT2 particularly welcomes applications from women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities who are currently under-represented in the film and television industry.*



skillset



FT2, fourth floor, warwick house, 9 warwick street,  
london w1b 5ly. website: [www.ft2.org.uk](http://www.ft2.org.uk)



### UK Administrator

Brockley (near Bristol)  
Salary: in the range £15,015 to £16,500  
Full-time

Motivation is a dynamic and innovative charity working to improve the quality of life of people with mobility disabilities, primarily in developing countries.

The role of UK Administrator is varied and interesting, covering everything from opening the post and managing our small computer network to dealing with overseas travel arrangements and insurance issues for expatriate staff. It can be demanding, and you will need to be extremely organised with a confident and flexible approach.

Motivation is based in a friendly, rural working environment 20 minutes from central Bristol.

For an application pack, please contact Sam Rodda via e-mail: [rodda@motivation.org.uk](mailto:rodda@motivation.org.uk) or telephone 01275 464012.

Applications are particularly welcomed from disabled people, women, and members of ethnic minorities.

Closing date for completed applications: Friday 6th February 2004  
[www.motivation.org.uk](http://www.motivation.org.uk)

Registered charity number 1079358

## • Events



National  
Housing  
Federation

## Disabled Tenants' Charter Workshops

The National Housing Federation has appointed a team to organise a series of regional workshops to establish the issues a 'Charter' should address. The Charter will describe what disabled people can expect from Housing Associations, whether they are tenants or would like to become tenants.

In March 2004 the team will be in London, Birmingham, Exeter and Leeds listening to disabled people. They want to meet as wide a range of people as possible of different ages, backgrounds and circumstances.

"This project is an opportunity for disabled residents to make their voices heard. Housing Associations need to know what disabled people want, so it's really important to get involved" Andy Rickell (Chief Executive of the British Council of Disabled People)

Region	City	Date
South East	London	Monday 1 March 2004
Midlands and North West	Birmingham	Thursday 11 March 2004
South West	Exeter	Tuesday 16 March 2004
North	Leeds	Friday 26 March 2004

For more information and/or a registration form contact Clare on: [planitclare@aol.com](mailto:planitclare@aol.com) or phone 020 8352 0253 (Minicom 18001 0208 352 0253)

Closing date for registration is Friday 13 February 2004.

The team would also like to participate in other relevant events where disabled tenants' experiences/concerns are discussed; conferences, tenants meetings, local forums etc. To suggest events contact Clare (details above)

## Public Policy Advisor

Haywards Heath

Salary £26,000

**Sight Savers International believes that no man, woman or child should be needlessly blind. Since 1950 we have helped to restore sight to almost five million people and treated 58 million for conditions threatening blindness.**

The role of the Public Policy Advisor is a new and exciting position and your overall function will be to undertake policy analysis and research in a number of defined topic areas with particular reference to health, disability and education.

You will be gathering, analysing and interpreting information from the external policy environment and the evidence from Sight Savers programmes and then summarising this research by preparing background papers, briefing documents and reports. You will be contributing to the development of organisational strategies, policies and communications and will give support to the planning and implementation of advocacy activities overseas.

To take on this challenge, you will need at least 2-3 years' work experience in the international development sector, and be able to demonstrate an understanding of current development issues. Educated to degree level you will have experience of writing and researching policy briefings and have the communication skills to present your research to different audiences.

You must be willing to undertake 4-6 weeks overseas travel per year for briefing and training purposes.

**As an Equal Opportunities Employer applications from people who are visually impaired or blind are particularly welcome.**

For an application pack, please email [jobs@sightsavers.org](mailto:jobs@sightsavers.org) or phone Human Resources on 01444 446633 quoting reference PPA1.

Closing date: 13th February 2004.

[www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)

*Saving sight - changing lives*



Registered Charity No. 207544.

## • Tender

### CONTRACTS FOR TENDER

Connexions is an exciting Government initiative designed to ensure that all young people get the best start in life. South Central Connexions Partnership (SCCP) covers Hampshire, The Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. SCCP works for and with all young people aged 13-19 (up to 25 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) to challenge and overcome barriers and ensure that they have every chance to achieve their full potential. SCCP hopes that through access to the relevant information, guidance and support they need, each young person will be given the opportunity to make informed choices about their future and make a successful transition to adulthood.

It is our responsibility to ensure that we provide the best service at the best value for money. As we draw near to the close of our first contracting period, we have decided to offer our contracts on an OPEN TENDER basis.

**The contracts are:**

**Contract 1: Services to young people in education and/or vocational training**

**Contract 2: In-Service Education, training (INSET) support and consultancy services to professionals and practitioners**

**Contract 3: Services to young people in the community including those not in education, employment and/or training**

**Contract 4: Connexions Centres**

We are seeking suitable contractors with relevant experience to tender for any number of the above contracts in one or more of our four local authority areas.

**Request for tender documentation must be received by 30 January 2004.**

**Closing date for completed tenders is 26 February 2004**

If you wish to receive more information on the above contracts and a tender pack please contact: Helen Bignell, Contracts Manager, South Central Connexions Partnership Ltd. Tel: **01489 566997**

Email: [helenbignell@connexions-southcentral.org](mailto:helenbignell@connexions-southcentral.org)

*Connexions is an Equal Opportunities organisation*

[www.connexions-southcentral.org.uk](http://www.connexions-southcentral.org.uk)

connexions

South Central



• Recruitment (on pages 41 to 46)

## DIVERSITY POLICY MANAGER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UNIT

Starting salary £38,570 (subject to review)

'Ending homelessness, creating successful sustainable communities and tackling social exclusion are just some of the key tasks of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)'.

The ODPM is responsible for policy, delivery and programmes on housing, planning, homelessness and the fire service. Other policy areas include devolution and regional and local government. The Office also takes responsibility for the Social Exclusion Unit, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Government Offices for the Regions. The ODPM has a radical agenda which cuts across government - ensuring that Departments work together to develop thriving, inclusive, sustainable communities - creating better places - achieving better quality of life for all.

Based within the ODPM's Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU), this new post is key to delivering the ODPM's commitments to place equality and diversity at the heart of its policies and programmes. We are looking for a proactive and committed individual to quickly establish credibility and deliver on an increasingly complex and dynamic portfolio. Working with the Unit Head, you will take responsibility for developing and implementing a wide range of policies and initiatives in response to current and emerging equalities legislation and will provide specialist advice on diversity issues and trends.

The EDU has a strategic and co-ordinating role across the ODPM and its four executive agencies. You will work across the functions of the Office and in partnership with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including other government departments. The ODPM would also consider a secondment to this post.

### THE PERSON

#### Essential

- Minimum degree or equivalent and two years' experience leading on equality and diversity policies and projects at a management level **OR** five years' experience leading on equality and diversity policies and projects at a management level
- Experience of policy development, implementation and evaluation
- Ability to work collaboratively across organisations

- Evidence of analytical skills and creativity
- Ability to manage work and resources
- Effective communication and influencing skills
- Ability to demonstrate strong and consistent leadership skills.

#### Desirable

- Knowledge of organisational development and change management, particularly in relation to culture change
- Project management techniques.

For an application pack and further written information about this interesting and challenging role, please contact Dina Markey (our representative at CPG HR Services) on 020 7562 1653, fax 020 7588 8013, email [odpm@centrepointhgroup.co.uk](mailto:odpm@centrepointhgroup.co.uk) or write to CPG HR Services, 16 St Helens Place, London EC3A 6DP, quoting ref 995. Alternatively, you can apply online at [www.centrepointhgroup.co.uk](http://www.centrepointhgroup.co.uk). The closing date for receipt of applications is 6th February 2004.

The ODPM is an equal opportunities employer. Applications are welcomed from all suitably qualified people regardless of race, religion, gender, marital status, disability, age or sexual orientation. Under the Data Protection Act, the data provided or completed on application forms will be used for the specific purpose of Human Resources Management and will not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose.



OFFICE OF THE  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER



# DN

disabilitynow

20th anniversary

Disability Now's  
20th Anniversary

March 1984 -  
March 2004

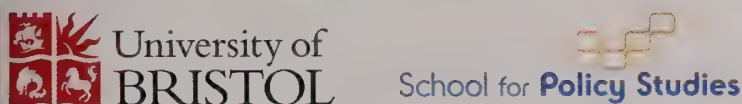
DN is 20. To celebrate this momentous occasion we will be highlighting achievements from the last 20 years in the March 2004 edition.

To help us celebrate we would like you to consider one of the following options:

- An advert on our special souvenir 4 page tabloid wraparound
- A congratulations statement in your advert
- A comparison advert from 20 years ago in comparison with today

Please call me before 3rd February and help us celebrate this anniversary. Call 020 7619 7320, email [patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk](mailto:patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk)

• Courses



## Study for an MSc in Social Work

The School for Policy Studies invites applications to its new Social Work programme commencing October 2004. The programme is accredited by the General Social Care Council and is a two-year modular course comprising of a core programme, a range of modular options and two practice placements. The General Social Care Council will provide bursaries and tuition fees for eligible postgraduate students.

Social Work at the University of Bristol has been rated as 'excellent' in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise making it the only unit to receive the top rating for research in the UK.

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants usually need a good honours degree in any discipline, and a minimum of 6 months full-time (or the equivalent part-time) experience relevant to social work.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For further Information about the MSc in Social Work, please contact:

Helen Purdie  
School for Policy Studies  
University of Bristol  
8 Priory Road  
Bristol, BS8 1TZ  
T: +44 (0)117 9545571  
E: [H.Purdie@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:H.Purdie@bristol.ac.uk)  
W: [www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/)

• Property



[www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk](http://www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk)

To buy, sell or let accessible or adapted homes, then visit [www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk](http://www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk)

Properties currently available in East Sussex, Surrey, London, Northants, Yorkshire and the Isle of Man,

or phone 01323 418909 and ask for Mimi.

## Equality and Diversity Manager

North Somerset Council is committed to establishing a framework for the Council with regard to the National Equalities Standard and Race Relations (Amendment Act).

Salary: £31,356 - £34,413 p.a.

37 hours per week

We are looking for someone with proven experience of managing diversity projects and who can establish a positive equality culture in both employment and service delivery.

If you would like more information about this exciting new post please visit our website [www.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk)

If you are not able to access our website:

an equal opportunities employer

Tel: 01934 634 513 (voicemail service)

e-mail: [csu.personnel@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:csu.personnel@n-somerset.gov.uk)

Closing date: noon Friday 30 January 2004

Please note: no CVs

Previous shortlisted applicants need not apply



VOICE UK: qualified Training and Development Manager, £25,473-£27,003 knowledge of working with people with learning disabilities and the criminal justice system. Home or office (Derby) based. Closing date: 30 January 2004, interviews 10 February 2004. Contact 01332 869310 or [voiceuk@clara.co.uk](mailto:voiceuk@clara.co.uk)

• Public appointments

## VOLUNTARY POST AS A TRUSTEE WITH BRUNELCARE

BRUNELCARE  
spend around 70%  
more on training  
than the average  
UK company.

Our charity is committed to providing a wide range of services for older people in and around Bristol, with a turnover of £13m per annum. We are required by law to appoint voluntary trustees to oversee our activities. The trustees meet about ten times per year to supervise our activities.

John Gunnery, who is our Chairman and leads the Trustee Board, promises you the opportunity to have an active say in how our Charity is run, as one of our trustees.

We are keen for you to draw on your experience of black and ethnic minority, disabled, or elderly oriented communities. Many of the people we care for and employ are from similar communities.

These are unpaid positions. For further details please contact Janet Bolton on 0117 9144204, who will be able to discuss the appointment and induction processes involved.

BRUNELCARE is an equal opportunities employer. Registered Charity Number 201555.

brunelcare  
Care and choice for older people



**CHAI**The Commission  
For Health Audit  
And Inspection

## IMPROVING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

From April 2004, the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (CHAI) will take on the responsibility of encouraging improvement in the quality of healthcare through independent assessment of services provided to patients by both the NHS and private healthcare providers. Join at the start of this important new initiative and enjoy a progressive working environment where you will be valued and respected.

Part of its new responsibilities will be the Complaints function. Based in Central Manchester, the team will deal with unresolved complaints about NHS care, reviewing each case on its merits and making consistent, objective and fair independent decisions.

### Team Leaders - up to 4 posts

Ref: 1058

**Circa £40k or more for experienced candidates**

Responsible for a team of Case Managers and Panel Co-ordinators, you will ensure the timely, objective and patient-focused delivery of our complaints procedure. This will involve monitoring processes, identifying trends that can inform service improvements and ensuring that Case Managers keep clear records to show investigations are evidence-based.

An articulate, credible and charismatic leader, you will have a minimum of five years' experience of investigation and judgement activity at management level. Able to strategically plan resources to ensure quality outcomes, you will have the ability to communicate our vision to patients and stakeholders.

### Case Managers - 32 posts

Ref: 1059

**Circa £30k**

With the aim of improving the delivery of healthcare to all users, you will manage complaints to a fair and objective outcome and use information derived from analysis to influence and achieve service improvements. A confident communicator, you will also build relationships with patients and their representatives.

Mature and positive in your approach, you will have three years' experience in an investigative role, ideally within a social services or healthcare setting. Committed, organised and IT literate, you will display a constructive approach to problem resolution. Good listening and negotiation skills will also be essential.

### Panel Co-ordinators - 12 posts

Ref: 1060

**Circa £25k**

As the link between CHAI and Complaints panel members, you will co-ordinate panel hearings and monitor the effectiveness of the hearings process. You will select panel members and independent experts, finalise the time and place of the hearing and communicate information to those concerned.

With three years' experience in a similar administrative role, you will have supported senior managers in a large organisation and developed effective administration systems. Able to work on your own initiative, you will have good interpersonal and report writing skills and a flexible and professional approach.

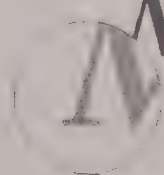
**For an application pack, please contact Dina Markey (our representative at CPG HR Services) on 020 7562 1653, fax 020 7588 8013, email [chai@centrepointhgroup.co.uk](mailto:chai@centrepointhgroup.co.uk) or write to CPG HR Services, 16 St Helens Place, London EC3A 6DP, quoting the relevant reference. Alternatively, you can apply online at [www.centrepointhgroup.co.uk](http://www.centrepointhgroup.co.uk)**

**To find out more about CHAI and the new Complaints function or to hear about new vacancies within CHAI, there will be an open evening on 27th January at 6.00pm. If you are interested in attending, it will be held at CHAI, Peter House, Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5AN.**

**Closing date for applications is 6th February 2004.**

**Successful candidates will be required to attend an assessment during week commencing 1st March. Final stage interviews will be held on 15th and 16th March for Team Leaders and week commencing 22nd March for Case Managers and Panel Co-ordinators.**

CHAI is committed to diversity and encourages applications from all sections of the community irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or religion.



## Mystery Shoppers

customer service specialists

## We Need You! Specialist Mystery Shoppers Required

Do you use a wheelchair? • Need crutches to get about?  
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No mystery shopping experience required, detailed guidelines and brief given.

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mystery-shoppers.co.uk** Website **www.mystery-shoppers.co.uk**



## UNLIMITED DVD RENTALS AT ONE GREAT PRICE!



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**M**ailbox Movies have come up with a brand new concept in renting movies. In return for a small monthly subscription fee their customers can enjoy unlimited DVD, Playstation 2 and Xbox rentals. Their prices start from the ludicrously low price of £9.47 per month. All postal costs are included in the price and renting with Mailbox Movies means there are no due back dates so there are no late fines. Why go out in the cold and the rain for your movies, when you can let Mailbox Movies bring your evening's entertainment to you, AND save you money?

Jan Lander from Cambridgeshire has osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia syndrome and chronic asthma. She has been a member of Mailbox Movies for a year and cannot imagine life without them.

"When I joined Mailbox Movies I felt instantly at home with them. They have patience, courtesy and sorted things out for me so now I don't have to go to the cinema, which can be difficult and expensive. I can watch films when I want to in the comfort of my own home. I get an enormous amount of pleasure and feel like a real person, watching what everyone else is watching. I'd recommend them to anybody."

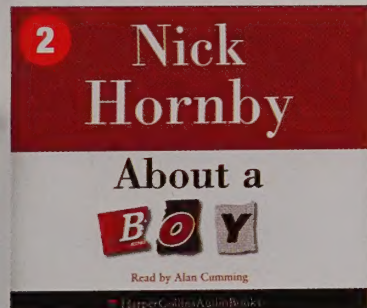
For more information visit [www.mailboxmovies.com](http://www.mailboxmovies.com)

Thanks to Mailbox Movies, *DN* has a DVD Player worth £114.99 and 6 months UNLIMITED DVD rentals to give away.

For your chance to win, tick DVD in the entry form and return it to our freepost address.



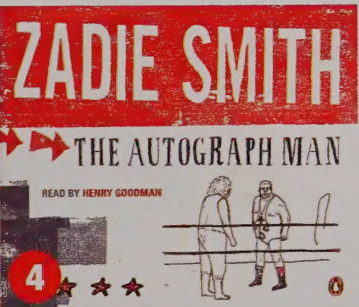
## A NOVEL IDEA



**O**n these cold winter evenings what could be better than curling up with a good book? Waterstone's has come up trumps again and given us four great CD audio books worth up to £14.99, to get you in the mood. Whether it's the historical story of *Elizabeth I's* childhood by David Starkey (1); a modern tale of a friendship that grows between a man and a boy with very different lifestyles in Nick Hornby's *About a Boy* (2); a thriller by Tom Clancy called *Red Rabbit* (3) or something a bit different, Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man* (4), a comical tour of the hollow traits of modernity, that takes your fancy, you're sure to be glued.

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**WATERSTONE'S**



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The NEW Cyclone Mirage is made from Grade 9 (Ti325) Titanium. Cyclone are the only wheelchair manufacturer outside of the USA to fabricate their frames from this Elite aerospace metal.  
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**Freephone 0800 180 48 50**  
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## to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send FOR FREE to *Disability Now*, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or e-mail the details to: [elizabeth.cowley@scope.org.uk](mailto:elizabeth.cowley@scope.org.uk)

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## terms &amp; conditions

• closing date for entrants: 22.02.04 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to *DN* staff or associates • Winners may be announced in *DN* • In association with Mailbox Movies and Waterstone's. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included ☐

## DN next month



Bath time at Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage, Sri Lanka

All the best news, views, jobs and offers.  
On sale 23 February.

## BIRTHDAY BINGE

*DN* celebrates 20 years with a special 8-page supplement

## HACKED OFF CAMPAIGN

National newspaper survey results: Who's accessible? Who employs disabled journalists?

## MILES FROM HOME

People with learning difficulties abandoned in care homes. John Pring investigates

## HOLIDAY TIME (3)

More ideas and information, including a trip to Sri Lanka

## NEWSAGENT ORDER FORM

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Please deliver a copy of *Disability Now* to my home address ☐

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# DN

disabilitynow

20th anniversary

£1.80 February 2004

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legal action

**Team spirit**

Golden boys scoop  
award

**Let's talk about sex**

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**LEWIS REED**

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Lewis Reed wish you a very happy New Year. To give your New Year the joyous start it deserves we are offering a whopping **\*£1,000.00** discount on all stock Wheelchair Accessible Citroen Berlingo Multispaces delivered before 31st March 2004. For more information or to book a test drive call **0845 345 0127** or visit [www.lewisreedgroup.co.uk](http://www.lewisreedgroup.co.uk)

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Toyota Hiace, Volkswagen T5,  
Renault Traffic, Renault Master



\*The £1,000.00 discount is available for all Stock Citroen Berlingos delivered before the 31st March 2004. Most models are available for immediate delivery. Please contact us on 0845 345 0127 for full details of the offer. All prices exclusive of VAT and Road Fund Licence. Errors & omissions excepted. Model shown - Citroen Berlingo Multispace may have features available as optional extras.



# Disability Now

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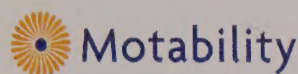
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